

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

WWW.ARPLUS.COM

UK £8/€15 USA \$25 JUNE 2008



BORDERS



CULTURE AND THE CITY

AR/Protek roundtable

Ken Shuttleworth of Make suggested there were two main directions in which tall building design is moving: 'One is trying to find a new aesthetic following new glazing and walling, something different, probably informed by energy mapping of projects. The other one is just objects, just shapes'. This observation came from attendance at the Tall Buildings Council conference in Dubai, also attended by Simon Allford of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris. He noted one area where some developers in Dubai are ahead of those in London lies in 'mixing things up', sandwiching offices with hotels or housing. 'You get 24-hour energy cycling and the building starts to work much more intelligently. That's where, programmatically, we're fairly hopeless in the UK ... we're still waiting for people to stack things up in a way that is smart'.

RIBA president Sunand Prasad wondered what prompted innovation. The continuing world of glass boxes, much in evidence at MIPIM, raised the question of the role of forthcoming legislation in compelling disclosure of energy consumption. Before the UN's climate change conference in Copenhagen in 2009, there would be some kind of international climate change treaty put in place, he believed. 'If it's worth anything it will create an environment in which we can all do our work properly. That should be its aim. So that as inventors and designers and constructors, we can actually all do our jobs.' Thankfully, Prasad added, with things like differential road taxes coming to the fore, people are beginning to wake up to necessary change.

SOM design partner Gary Haney said the US had been off the pace, partly because oil has been so cheap, but that it is now starting to be driven by developers with tenants that ask them for energy-efficient buildings. 'That has caused a sea-change', he said. 'We depend a lot on the LEED system and now tenants are demanding it. You are also seeing certain cities like New York establishing a gold LEED standard. It's coming from the marketplace and it's coming from the one place developers pay attention to, and that's who's paying the rent.'

FXFowle managing director Steven Miller, who works in Dubai, noted the recent decision by the Sheikh on environmental matters. Overnight, a law was implemented stating that everything had to be LEED gold-rated. This was an 'amazing experience' for a company such as Miller's, designing a new waterfront community



RIBA President Sunand Prasad, Ken Shuttleworth (Make), Robin Partington (Hamilton Associates) and Simon Allford (Allford Hall Monaghan Morris).

for 75 000 people. 'We had to take this detailed masterplan and create a gold LEED neighbourhood standard.' Architects could begin to charge for this added environmental performance. Oddly, however, although there is a distinct obligation to design and construct with these principles to the fore, there is no agency around that is going to check it. For Karen Cook, principal at Kohn Pedersen Fox, this was one of the main sticking points when it came to explaining schemes to clients. 'We tell clients that it is very important for them to decide their targets for sustainability at the beginning because it does affect dramatically the way the design is evolving and a lot of the clients just want to do the minimum but also the option to not do those extras.' Many clients – although not one German client for whom KPF is doing a London tower – simply want to get round the legislation. For Cook it would be more sensible to have mixed use neighbourhoods rather than strive for one building to 'solve all your problems' by retaining a mix of uses.

For Hamilton Associates' Robin Partington, 'what's happening now is that at long last somebody has started to make a link between development investment, where the long-term costs associated with the building are starting to manifest themselves in short-term decisions.' Badges which used to be just reserved for fridges on energy performance will now be added to buildings, which would be good, but not as important as a link between the quality of a working environment and rental values. As with hospitals and provable recovery rates at well-designed environments, offices have sickness rates and it may be possible to put a value on the square footage of a building which bears this in mind. 'At the moment you can't, but every instinct you've got tells you it's there.'

Gensler managing partner in New York Joe Brancato said user demand was making a difference. 'When it built its New York tower, the Bank of America worked hard to achieve a platinum rating on LEED, with a gold on the interior. The tenants are driving the developers – with electricity and power going up the way it is, it starts to make more sense to focus on it, not just because your tenants are driving it but because the energy industry is supporting a sustainable future. It may feel like it has been happening slowly, but there has been quite a bit of difference over the last 10 years, with tenants and landlords embracing it.'

Environmental consultant Alex Tosetti suggested that 2007 was the last of 'greenwash' and this is the first of real change. 'I think the property industry is 10 years behind the manufacturing, corporate and oil and gas sectors', he said. But things are happening; legislation is coming, such as Energy Performance Certificates, which will be an evaluation of the building. And the investors and funders of buildings are putting their money where their mouths are because occupiers want staff retention. 'They want decent buildings because it's an occupier-driven market.'

Gensler executive director Andy Cohen said he was seeing innovation from the inside of buildings, out, applying the user's perspective and an energy context. Gary Haney was optimistic about the influence of IT: buildings could be analysed and with parametric programming you could shape a building and get an immediate response on daylight factors, for example. This would be the 'next big step', with programmes talking to each other and computing capability increasing at an astonishing rate. 'It's just amazing – it will revolutionise this whole discussion within two years.'

Summing up, AR editor Paul Finch suggested that the question of energy consumption was clearly rising further up the design agenda, and would continue to be a key driver in the office design scene, worldwide. The dream of 'long life, loose fit, low energy', which a past president of the RIBA, Alex Gordon, coined in a report more than 30 years ago, seemed more prescient than ever. DAVID TAYLOR

ENERGY MATTERS

Energy considerations are beginning to loom large in the world of office design, judging by an AR organised discussion at the annual MIPIM property festival in March. The event was sponsored by Protek.