

Setting the world to rights at MIPIM with a debate about smarter building

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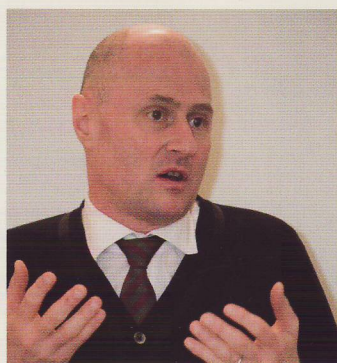
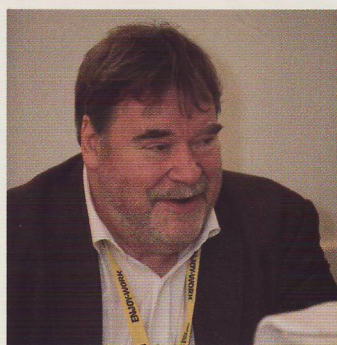
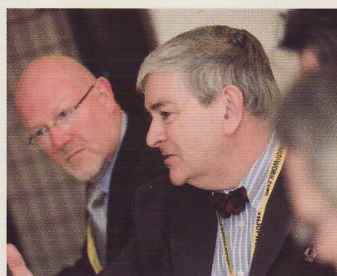
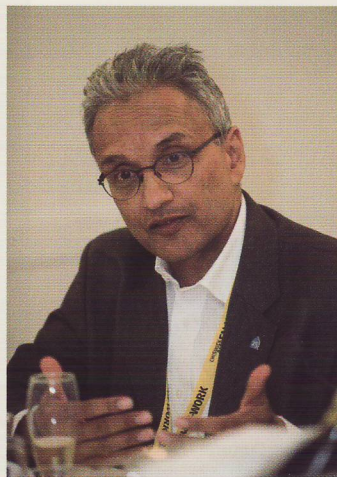
'We've entered a different phase,' says developer Roger Zogolovitch (*pictured centre, on the right*), taking his seat alongside the industry experts gathered to discuss commercial development over lunch in Cannes. It's the second day of MIPIM, the annual real estate trade fair. 'The market may now be truly global but every market condition is local and generates income in completely different ways,' Zogolovitch claims that, without a restructuring of how these projects are funded and pipelined, quality and design innovation will go out the window. 'We have to deliver enduring value,' he adds. 'We've made development too specific. It is absurd that buildings are demolished because they don't offer a loose fit.' And just like that, before the bread has even been scooped, we have a debate.

Mike Hussey, managing director of property fund Almacantar, says yes, new funding models are a must ('You can forget about the banks this year') and so is the need to 'build smarter, cheaper and more efficiently.' But what, asks CABE chairman Paul Finch (*second from bottom*), would smarter commercial buildings look like? That depends on

whether a loose-fit or tailor-made model holds sway. 'There is excessive supply, so tenants are more demanding,' says Tim Evans of Sheppard Robson. 'If anything, the product is becoming more tightly specified.' Swanke Hayden Connell Architects' Bob Fry agrees. 'Enduring buildings are the ones exposed to a pre-let tenancy. Unless it's pre-let, things get left out during development.'

A mantra is agreed: reduce cost but not the offer. 'We need a raw product: take energy and waste out of the building's cost,' says Simon Allford (*bottom*) of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris. Alex Tosetti of consultant URS thinks behavioural change will have the biggest impact on the emerging commercial typology. 'Digital communications and social media will totally change the shape of the office,' Fry has seen it already in offices he designed for EC Harris in King's Cross, London. 'We created break-out spaces with kitchen tables where you can set up your laptop and have a coffee – workers under 40 prefer it. Traditional workspaces are on their way out.'

Could converging 'building smarter' and the 'mobile' generation's way of doing things



however, work in favour of loose-fit development? 'It could come down to obsolescence and how quickly you can convert a property into something else,' suggests Hussey. 'The "beanbag and laptop" office need be no more than a shell and core plan.'

Alongside this desire for loose-fit is a trend towards the greater densification of space. For Goldman Sachs, says Thomas Kerwin of SOM, which designed the firm's New York interiors, a managing director gets 7m², while a typical big earner gets four. In Mumbai however, Sanjay Puri explains that 3.6m² is 'luxury', with the typical call centre worker afforded just 2.4m². 'Productivity is the holy grail,' says London-based architect Stephan Reinke. 'We're talking slave-ship density.' But as Robert Goodwin of Perkins+Will says, 'If you design a space to be non-hierarchical, you generate higher densities. But that's not going to work for a law office.'

Globally, low-carbon design is working itself into a default position. As Puri, Stefan Antoni of Cape Town practice SAOTA and Sanya Tomic (*top*) of Sidell Gibson Architects in London all find, 'every developer wants to make their building sustainable – but it's because of market forces, not regulation.' Evans, nevertheless, thinks green infrastructure projects will have a more crucial environmental role to play. On-site renewables are merely 'tokenistic'. Retrofit, on the other hand, is going to be huge. 'We've already got 75 per cent of the buildings we're going to need over the next quarter century,' says Evans. 'We just need to make them more efficient.' Other delegates were Jackie Blanden from WM Protek and Sunand Prasad of Penoyre & Prasad (*second from top*)