



URBAN FUTURE: NETWORK EVENING EXPLORES TOMORROW'S CITIES

By **Peter Firth**

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Otto Ng : Experts : Future Industries

London – Last night LS:N Global members gathered at The Future Laboratory HQ for our Future Cities network evening to hear about the obstacles and opportunities in designing urban centres.

Chiming with one of the topics to be covered in our forthcoming Trend Briefing, the Future Cities network evening brought together six expert speakers who outlined ways that cities can be smarter, more sustainable, more empathetic and offer a better quality of life.

Micro-recycler

Charlie Crook, co-founder of Future Industries, explained how his micro-recycling system provides a model for future home recycling. The machine that Crook and his co-founder Ben Atkinson-Willes created enables people to repurpose plastic waste into new and useful objects.

‘As consumers, we have a responsibility to account for the waste that we expel,’ says Crook. ‘We were unsatisfied with how there is little to no transparency in what happens to materials when they are taken for recycling.’

Interventionist

Jason Bruges, founder of Jason Bruges Studio, presented some of his recent work to guests and showed ways that public spaces can be more beautiful and friendly to the environment. The ‘digital fountain’ created by the studio for Westfield Stratford City shopping centre illustrated how public installations can be impactful and environmentally friendly. The 7,000 LCD screens of the installation use only 60 watts of power.

Abolitionist

Eric R Kuhne conveyed some revolutionary and strongly phrased ideas about how brands should behave towards customers amid a growing cityscape.

‘Brands are the new slave traders. You need to give people empowerment, not force them to Hoover up your crap,’ says Kuhne. ‘People don’t buy products, they buy ideas, and if you can empower consumers, you can change a society overnight.’

Smarter cities

Rick Robinson, IBM's Architect for Smarter Cities, explained ways that living in future megacities can be enhanced with technology, and by understanding the flows of people as well as systems.

'Infrastructure is not just made up of phone lines and transport systems, it is made up of people,' says Robinson. 'In emerging economies systems will have to be managed with social interventions as well as technological ones.'

Planting a seed

Clare Brass, senior design tutor at the RCA and founder of the Seed Foundation (Social Environmental Enterprise and Design), explained how designing and manufacturing need to be viewed within the larger systems.

'I realised that, with designing, so many products end up in landfill,' says Brass. 'There is no such thing as a sustainable product, but if you can make the product part of a longer existence than turning into rubbish, then the impact is reduced.'

Beamed in

In an LS:N Global first, Hong Kong-based MIT architect and technologist Otto Ng presented to guests in a pre-recorded address from China. Ng explained how technology can make spaces adaptable to a variety of purposes.

To book a place at LS:N Global's forthcoming Trend Briefing, or to learn more, see our [events page](#).