

Resilience First Webinar Summary

‘Placemaking and building resilient cities.’ In partnership with ICE.

Chair:

Rachel Skinner, President, Institution of Civil Engineers.

Speakers:

Greg Clark, Group Advisor, Future Cities & New Industries, HSBC.

Peter Baird, Senior Associate and Urban Designer, Perkins & Will.

Professor David Alexander, Professor of Risk and Disaster Reduction, UCL.

Key Opening Remarks:

- An urban community’s connection to place is critical to its resilience.
- In light of Covid-19, in terms of resilience, we need to consider what else we might be missing and where, and on what, should we be keeping a half or a quarter of an eye on.
- Resilience for the future has to be about more than recover and regrow. Covid-19 has presented an opportunity to put right elements of place, that were perhaps not right before, to shape places which are generally better to be in.
- Climate change has to be a central focus, not just attacking carbon emissions, but in a defensive sense, we will need to cope and adapt with 30 years of a worsening climate, even if we start getting things right now. It is not a nice to have, it is genuinely urgent.

Designing Global Resilient Cities:

- The placemaking question is one which everyone who has worked in the built environment has been grappling for years, it is the interaction between people, where they live and how they work. Some places get it right and some places maybe less so.
- Effective placemaking cannot be done without interacting with the people which inhabit that space.
- While resilience does not respect physical boundaries and geographic lines, resilience and placemaking is considered by people at the micro level as to how it affects their day to day.
- A challenge within placemaking that exists is to identify gaps in the conversation on resilience, these gaps are reducing, but an awareness needs to be maintained of the contextual differences in these discussions. There is a need to tailor the data gathering and indexing to a particular community context. This will enable resilient design with social benefit.
- A second challenge is that growing participation requires digital infrastructure where communities can understand the data. Wellington, NZ, is an example of such an approach where communities can understand threats such as sea level rise and how it relates to them and their homes.
- A third challenge comes when considering competing and collaborating cities. When placemaking, you want to avoid investment in one area, which would be to the detriment of another. Understanding how areas can complement each other in their placemaking is critical.
- A fourth challenge is creating local adaptable space for collaboration and social interaction. This is the level which really impacts on people. The best examples of solutions that can improve the green economy and provide space for community cohesion are those that are tuned and tailored to the communities they serve. This highlights well thought out design as providing features which are inherently resilient.

Importance of Green Investments to drive Cities fit for the Future:

- The quest for resilient cities is part of the human experience of living in this century of cities. Given the combination of increased urbanisation and global population growth the key question is if we can position cities as the most resilient way to sustain human life.
- Cities are in the most part good for us, however there is a choice between good urbanisation and bad urbanisation. Resilient cities are those that benefit from good urbanisation and avoid

bad urbanisation. Good urbanisation moving forward is about using good solutions to increase the carrying capacity of our cities so that they can sustainably support future population growth. When we exceed carrying capacities, that is when we step into bad urbanisation.

- We are moving away from a model where only 30 global cities mattered, and into a model where 6-7 hundred of the 5000 cities around the world are clearly driving economies, and a hundred of which, have become centres of knowledge exchange, trade, skills and so much more. Each of these cities will be operating to a slightly different model of success, and resilience will be different depending on the type of city you are in.
- Technology really matters for cities, both to improve the efficiency of city systems, but also in shifting the nature of the economies that cities house.
- We are moving to a fourth cycle of city, not the robot city, but the co-created city where a civic resilience exists.
- Cities are both producers of climate change and victims of it, and now we see that all cities will become more resilient by pursuing the zero-carbon narrative. The agenda for resilience over the next decade will focus on the decarbonisation story, although the resilient cities of the future will not just reduce their impact on climate change but use decarbonisation to achieve growth in other areas.
- Where we are headed is not just a choice between the physical city and the virtual city, but a blended city model of hybridity.

Making the Urgent Case for Actions in Cities:

- When we look at disasters and genius loci we need to consider the importance of spirit of place in the recovery of urban environments post event.
- We need to consider when looking at spirit of place, what the population identifies with, what do they have allegiance to, what characterises a place, how we can maintain civic pride and loyalty to a place and, what the relative relationship is between people and things in place identity.
- Collective memory and identity can be part of building resilience of place.

Points raised in discussion:

- There is a massive revolution taking place in how the private sector and financial institutions have embraced the idea of resilience. Pressure from shareholders and stakeholders on the one hand, coupled with progressive regulation from governments and peer pressure amongst financial institutions is leading to a huge appetite for investment in the sectors which boost resilience. As we move forward the competition will come, not from project leaders looking for finance, but from financiers who are desperate to place their money with the most resilient projects.
- As we move out of Covid and look at new factors of urban planning there is going to be some shifting and rebalancing. In some cases, such as NZ, Covid experiences have rebalanced the use of urban spaces with a growth in artisanal and independent production in cities, allowing producers to make and sell directly to customers. Equally, shifts in commuter habits allowed cities to open up their spaces for more social events and activities, which can drive community cohesion and connection to place. If cities can get their organisation and management structures right around those areas, as we move out of Covid, there is room for positive change.
- On the topic of security of cities, we accept that cities are the most sustainable way of supporting a growing population and this level of density is required for the health of the planet, however, with that we must also accept that there are externalities that pose as risks. Security is one of those externalities. Cities which are served by deep, expensive, increasingly digitised infrastructures, are at risk of both physical and digital attacks. As we move towards increased connectivity it is paramount that we maintain awareness of these externalities.
- Community engagement in design, does not necessarily require more funding, however it does bring into question the subject of timelines. Community members will not feed into a



project at the same speed as the design team, and this needs to be taken into account and not overlooked.

- Genuine inclusivity in urban design, both respecting and accommodating the needs of diverse populations is about social resilience.
- If we look for a city example of a shining light for other cities to follow for the future in terms of resilience, while perhaps there may be no right answer as it is entirely context dependent, there are a few examples of cities which have made good progress in relation to their size. With over 25 million people, Tokyo is a city that has coupled high-capacity engineering of infrastructure with high density, high amenity living. With 5 – 10 million people, Singapore is a city that has reinvented itself from scratch and figured out how to do flexible 21st century living. The smaller scale city Vienna of 2 million people has figured out how to have a resilient housing market and social system. Medellín, as a city of less than 1 million people, has figured out how to recover from a corrupt and violent past, to create a city where there is a huge amount of social capital.

Key Takeaway:

- There is a relationship between the physical and social capital of a city, and if you get that right, you create the context in which resilience can occur.

A recording of the webinar event can be found [here](#).

Speakers Bios:

Rachel Skinner is the 156th President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and is an Executive Director (Transport) at WSP. She is a Patron of Women in Transport (a not-for-profit) having been one of its founding board members since 2005. She is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, a chartered engineer and a chartered transport planner. Rachel chairs the Carbon stream of the Infrastructure Client Group (ICG) and was recently invited to join the external expert panel established to support the UK Department for Transport's Acceleration Unit that is focused on a faster, better and greener recovery beyond COVID-19. She served two years as an Infrastructure Commissioner for Scotland from late 2018. In 2016, Rachel was listed as one of The Telegraph's inaugural UK Top 50 Influential Women in Engineering; in 2017 she was named the Most Distinguished Winner and Best Woman Civil Engineer at the Women in Civil Engineering Awards, and in 2019 she was confirmed by the Financial Times as one of the UK's Top 100 Women in Engineering. Rachel has authored, scripted and hosted publications and films on topics including "Shaping Zero" about net zero carbon for infrastructure, "Making Better Places" on place-making and future mobility, and before that about digital technology and its potential for infrastructure, industry innovation and collaboration. Rachel is regularly invited to give keynote conference presentations and to chair international and national industry events. Rachel is involved with strategic projects for clients across the public and private sectors, including leadership of a growing portfolio of future mobility projects in the UK and overseas.

Prof Greg Clark CBE FAcSS is a highly experienced Advisor, Scholar, Non-Executive Director and Board Chairman with global reach and presence. Expertise covers city development, mobility, technology, digitisation & innovation, urban governance, city strategic planning, real estate & urban form, and place leadership. His core role as Senior Advisor on Future Cities and New Industries at HSBC Group covers future urbanisation, mobility, digital transformation, sustainable development, and impact investing. Greg Clark is the author of 10 books and more than 100 reports. He holds professorial roles at University College London and Strathclyde University, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, the Brookings Institution, and the Urban Land Institute. Current Non-Executive Board roles with Transport for London and London LEP. Greg Clark has provided thought leadership with global organisations including The World Economic Forum, The World Bank, OECD, UN Habitat, The Brookings Institution, European Investment Bank, and The Urban Land Institute, on the evolution of the metropolitan century. He supports leaders in more than 300 cities world-wide on



strategic futures and advises global firms on the investment and enterprise opportunities of an urbanising world. He also frequently appears on the BBC World Service as a global urban expert.

Peter Baird is a planner and designer who is passionate about enhancing the built environment through improved sense of place, walkability, and strengthening the role of integrated green and water sustainable design concepts. He advocates the analysis of, and sensitivity to, site context to establish transparent design decisions, improve problem solving, and create open dialogue with the community. His experience has led to a strong understanding of the physical and space requirements, market realities and the social interactions required to create active streets inspiring campus and urban environments. His experience spans multiple master plans and facility programs across the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand.

David Alexander is Professor of Risk and Disaster Reduction at University College London (UCL). He graduated in geography at the London School of Economics and obtained his PhD in Mediterranean geomorphology from UCL. From 1982 until 2002 he taught geomorphology, physical geography, natural hazards and disaster studies at the University of Massachusetts - Amherst (USA). Over the period 2003-7 he was Scientific Director of the Advanced School of Civil Protection of the regional government of Lombardy. As a Professor the University of Florence (2005-11) he was a leading member of the team that designed, launched and taught Italy's first Master of Civil Protection course. David is Visiting Professor at the Universities of Bournemouth and Northumbria (UK), Coimbra (Portugal) and Lund (Sweden) and Research Fellow at the Global Risk Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Alexander's book *Natural Disasters* was published in London and New York in 1993 and has frequently been reprinted. His subsequent books include *Confronting Catastrophe* (2000), *Principles of Emergency Planning and Management* (2002), *Recovery from Disaster* (with Ian Davis, 2015) and *How to Write an Emergency Plan* (2016).