



Press release for immediate use

Wednesday 30th October 2013

ARCHITECTS AND BUSINESS LEADERS DEBATE SMART CITIES AT WORLD ISLAMIC ECONOMIC FORUM

On the second day of the 9th World Islamic Economic Forum at the Excel Centre in London, leaders in the field of architecture gathered to debate the global future of cities. The panel discussed how to match smart cities technology with the needs of their citizens, and the challenge of maintaining cultural heritage throughout any changes.

The panel consisted of:

Neil M. Denari, Founder, Neil M. Denari Architects Inc., United States of America

Jesse Honsa, Co-Founder, Open Urban, Republic of Turkey

Prof. Dr. Uwe Krueger, Chief Executive Officer, Atkins Plc., United Kingdom

Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil, Award-Winning Architect, Republic of Egypt

Each panelist gave their thoughts on frameworks for creating cities in the future, from both creative and logistical points of view.

Neil M. Denari, Founder, Neil M. Denari Architects Inc.

On how to encourage compact neighbourhoods and reduce carbon emissions

"When you think about the future and adaptability, you have to think about smart people, and smart people are the kids of today... The younger generation may not either have the means to acquire a status or they just may not want to. Materiality on a personal level is starting to recede. So I'm more confident of problems of distance, space and time being solved because there's a sense, anthropologically, that the younger generation will want to get rid of their cars."

Jesse Honsa, Co-Founder, Open Urban

On how to build a truly smart city

"Ask what kind of institutions do we really need?...The smartest city is one that makes the most out of the productive potential and creative intelligence of the people who live in it."

Prof. Dr. Uwe Krueger, CEO, Atkins Plc.

On technological dependence and sustainability

"We need a truly holistic approach to build smart cities – it's not just about technology – and we have to truly listen to what people want from a city... The simple answer for sustainability is there has to be an adaptive process. Look at recent disasters – the electric shutdown in India in 2012, which was surely a wake-up call as to the resilience of infrastructure in the developing world, and the dangers of imposing Western methods everywhere. We have to look at what really matters to the citizens, and what is being imposed on the city..."

Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil, Award-Winning Architect

"I hope we have smart people before we have smart cities...The word creative does not mean to be different and create zig-zag buildings and so on, I mean why?...They have the splendors but they don't know what the people want... I found that university was like Marie Antoinette telling them to eat cakes when they have no bread..."

Notes to editors:

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The World Islamic Economic Forum is taking place at London's ExCel from October 29-31 2013, meeting outside the Muslim world for the first time in its history. The Forum, entitled 'Changing Worlds, New Relationships', is jointly hosted by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Malaysia. 18 Global Leaders, 5 Central Bank Governors, and more than 2700 CEOs, captains of industry, academic scholars, regional experts, professionals, corporate managers, policy makers, innovators, business leaders and investors from 128 countries will come together to explore the range of investment and business opportunities available across the world. www.9thwief.org

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