

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: FROM PRACTICE, RESEARCH

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0 Abstract

This paper reports the genesis, development and presentation of the recently completed World Squares For All masterplan for the Whitehall area of central London by a Norman Foster led design team. The paper has two aims. First, to describe the way in which Space Syntax techniques of detailed observation and configurational analysis have played a central role in the masterplan process - from generating design ideas to the process of public and private consultation. Second, to describe how Space Syntax techniques were advanced by the discovery of phenomena which existing methods gave an approximate account of, but fell short of fully explaining.

The paper will introduce the phenomenon of “necessity to innovate” and suggest that the applied research activities of the Space Syntax Laboratory, University College London make an essential contribution to the process of researching the built environment. They do this by bringing knowledge to bear on real-world issues, developing that knowledge through the dynamic of the design process, and feeding the developed knowledge back into the process of research.

Finally, the paper will speculate that the phenomenon of “necessity to innovate” is common to the activities of Researcher and Architect alike, and required by their participation in processes which engage the dynamic of society. The relationship developed between the Space Syntax Laboratory UCL and Foster and Partners over ten years of close collaboration is evidence of this, where the World Squares project represents the latest opportunity to advance research knowledge through the demanding rigour of practice.

Keywords:

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