



## How does technology influence the way we live and work?

Interview with Paul Vick from Paul Vick Architects



Theater and ICT centre. Credit photo : Martin Storey

| Véronique Fuller | Juin 2019 |

**Technology enables more people to work flexibly and remotely. Companies like WeWork are thriving in London catering not just for start-ups but also more established organisations. How are our expectations of the office environment changing?**

The mental mapping of our work is influenced by architecture. One underlying issue is the balance between public and private space, and the management of privacy. Some conversations, exchanges or documents can't be shared with all. For instance, in our design of the Innovation Warehouse incubator<sup>[1]</sup>, the spatial formats include not just informal but also ranges of more formal venues and areas. Furthermore, as companies develop, they may want more of their own privacy and territory ownership. How commercial transactions are conducted is another important factor. With teleconferencing, walls of screens can give a better sense of physical immersion and being close, even more so with Augmented Reality. Banks may need ever larger trading floors as transactions are physically rippling fast through the room while Maggies Centres where those affected by cancer will be looking for smaller individual spaces to share intimate stories and professional support. Manufacturing industries may be constrained by physical objects. Hot desking can't strictly be applied to every industry or every function: the cellular office has never totally disappeared.

**How is technology changing the way buildings are designed?**

Technology allows quicker and greater aggregation of data. From city planning,

geophysical understanding, Googlemaps, information is readily and widely accessible. Another important aspect is how modelling is changing. Michaelangelo was of course already using 3D models up to full scale size, the key difference is that today, these can be rendered very efficiently, very quickly and even linked to 3D printing. New aesthetic impact can be developed with complex geometries like curvatures, as seen in Frank Gehry's design for Bilbao Guggenheim Museum. Technology opens new opportunities. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, William Morris was terrified that the industrial revolution may undermine craftsmanship! We shouldn't be afraid now as the means of creation is widely dispersed and accessible.

**London was traditionally a lower city with its high rise dominated by church spires and of course both Georgian and Victorian Squares as well as tighter packed working housing . Last year, New London Architecture (NLA), an independent centre for London's built environment, revealed a pipeline of over 500 tall buildings to be built in London over the next decade. Demand for more office and residential space is changing the London skyline. Partly informed by sight lines of St Paul's Cathedral, Google's upcoming new European headquarters in London will take the shape of a landscaper with a garden at the top. Can technology help build greener new buildings?**

Many industries like hedge funds require high computing power and also laboratories creating challenges for air ventilation and temperature control and the need for air conditioning. However, the green agenda is resolvable. Technologies exist to build low energy buildings, reduce or omit altogether Carbon Dioxide or Volatile Organic Compound emissions, help with Carbon capture, careful energy control systems, right orientation and analysis of sunlight paths and better and better insulation and the use of materials with lower inherent energy use over their life and lower maintenance. It starts with using less, such as in our low energy 1<sup>st</sup> age to 3<sup>rd</sup> age residential project. From a political issue, the green agenda has to be transformed into a need that is understood as essential to all we do.

**You are the recipient of multiple innovation awards. Beyond technology, what is driving innovation?**

There is a thirst to know more about our world and us and improve our lives for ourselves, others and the next generation. Innovation is giving value to knowledge and in this sense it is contextual. Sometimes, it is helping clients solve problems they have historically learned to just live with. "Art is not the end, it is the beginning." Ai Wei Wei.

Design can be understood as problem solving, and Art as changing people's perception. Architecture and innovation inherently require both qualities.

**Finally, what would be your advice to a secondary school student who wants to become an architect?**

Learn everything you can about everything: English, French, history, mathematics, economics, physics, geography, art, D.T.I studied architecture because I realised that as an architect, one has an opportunity to ask the right questions about life and do something about it! Architecture can also open doors to many different careers. Many of my contemporaries, undertook the first degree in architecture only and went into something else including: film (filming, making sets and producing), curating a museum, branding, development economics and development in emerging economies, real estate development, fair trade, civil service and being elected into politics

<sup>[1]</sup> The Innovation Warehouse assists the growth of new businesses by providing investment, mentoring advice, access to professional services and flexible space at affordable costs.

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Paul Vick Architects will be present at the [London Festival of Architecture](#), which defines itself as the "the world's biggest annual architecture festival in the world's capital city for architecture" and will run from the 1st to 30th June 2019.

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[Paul Vick Architects](#) was awarded Most Innovative Architecture firm London 2019 and 2018 and Best Construction Adviser UK 2017. Paul is a professional architect (ARB, RIBA) and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts who has lectured on architecture at University College London, MIT and the National Building Museum. He trained at Cambridge University and Oxford Brookes University with extended periods in Washington DC and Beijing. His work has also been published in the Architect's Journal and World Architecture News amongst others. He trained at Cambridge University and Oxford Brookes University with extended periods in Washington DC and Beijing. Paul Vick is a juror for the International Property Awards 2019.