
Modernisation, development and conservation

April 2013

[Dominic Standish](#) , [Angela Connelly](#) , [Tom Jarman](#) and [Alex Solk](#) opened up 'sustainable development' to some critical thinking, chaired by [Jane Leach](#)



Debates about sustainability and development permeate multiple aspects of life throughout the world in the twenty-first century. With increasing urbanisation, those debates are often focused on the life of cities, including Manchester, Venice, Nairobi, Shanghai and Rio de Janeiro. Appropriate planning according to the changing character of geographical areas is especially challenging due to social and economic transformation. In addition, as rural areas become more managed, how we balance protecting the environment with development has become a pressing question.



With most worldwide manufacturing employment outside Western Europe and North America, how does this change life in these regions? Can Western cities become cultural, tourist, educational and service centres or is there still a role for industry? What implications do these questions have for western city development versus preserving ancient heritage?



This salon discussion will examine these questions in light of how the relationship of humanity to nature has changed. Nineteenth century modernisation applied science and industry to transform nature and Romantic Movement intellectuals reacted. Conservationist organisations were formed to protect places of natural beauty and heritage. Conservationism presumed a separation of society and nature, but in the early twentieth century a “human ecological” perspective integrated natural and social knowledge. Environmental thinkers of the 1960s developed the integration of natural and social knowledge to construct a holistic natural science. This integration was codified through the implementation of sustainable development policies from the 1980s. Sustainable development emphasises that environmentalism should not be limited to protecting nature, but should address economics and politics too.



However, sustainable development constrains modernisation and limits our ability to preserve nature and our heritage. Therefore, future planning should reject sustainable development in favour of full development and modernisation, coupled with preserving nature and heritage. How this approach influences different places is open to discussion. Dominic will put the case for modernisation to fulfil human needs while also achieving preservation.

Some background readings

[Tourism as an opportunity, not a threat](#) , by Dominic Standish, The Independent - Blogs, 11 November 2011

[Death in Venice: is tourism killing or saving the city?](#) YouTube film of Battle of Ideas Venice satellite panel debate, 11 October 2011

Listen again to the Manchester Salon discussion on [City 2.0](#) as part of the Love Architecture Festival, June 2012

[Supermarket lifeline could save Ancoats Dispensary from bulldozers](#) , Manchester Evening News, 28 July 2012

[Small plan syndrome](#) , by John Hitchcox, Financial Times, 2 November 2012

[Smash It: Who Cares?](#) by Martin Filler, New York Review of Books, 8 November 2012

[Futuristic Vision for a City Rooted in the Past](#) , by Elisabetta Povoledo, New York Times 6 December 2012

[Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet by Roger Scruton](#) , Reviewed by Dominic Standish April 2013

Watch video of discussion, thanks to Dan Clayton the [documentary filmmaker](#) from Leeds for producing this.

Discussion Partners



Manchester Society of Architects (MSA) was formed in 1865, it was affiliated to become a branch of the RIBA in 1891, and has a membership numbering approximately 800. The Society is the largest in the North West region of the RIBA and our members comprise approximately 45% of the entire region's total. The illustrious history of the MSA charts Manchester's rise to prominence from 'Cottonopolis' into a pioneering European City. Past Presidents have included many prestigious Manchester architects. For over 140 years through the generations, these architects have shaped the City of Manchester as we know it today.

The MSA represents and supports the architects and the architectural students of Manchester and promotes their work. We are supported by our chapters, Stockport Tameside and Macclesfield and Wigan Bolton and Bury. Manchester Young Practitioners in Architecture are also affiliated with the MSA. It organizes architectural events, lectures, travel scholarships and bursaries to students and organizes the annual MSA design awards which showcases the talents of Mancunian architects and architectural students.



The Manchester School of Architecture was formed in 1996, as an innovative collaboration

between Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester. The MSA draws on extensive teaching and research expertise within both institutions, with their students being able to make use of the facilities of both Universities. A decade after its formation, the MSA is gearing up to grow into a leading international centre for research and teaching in architecture and urban studies. The MSA is a joint school of the University of Manchester's School of Environment and Development (SED), and the Manchester Metropolitan University's Faculty of Art and Design.