

Edge Debate at Ecobuild – 16.30, 6th March 2013

The Politics of Carbon Emissions Data

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Energy is arguably our most precious resource and carbon emissions one of the most damaging of the pollutants we pump out into the atmosphere, but information on their use and emissions in the built environment are very hard to come by. Lack of good data means:

- Design is carried out without adequate knowledge of what works
- Lessons from existing buildings are not shared or learned
- The performance gap between design and use is pervasive
- Energy modelling software relate to compliance and not performance
- Energy benchmarks are ill-informed and out of date
- Innovation that achieves improved performance is not rewarded
- There is minimal social and consumer pressure for low carbon buildings
- The outcome of policies such as the Green Deal cannot be judged

All this indicates a need for making data on the energy use and carbon emissions of individual buildings, building types and communities freely available, with a recognised set of straightforward metrics. Yet this appears to be strongly resisted: why?

- Such data is seen as private
- Revealing real time data might make buildings insecure and vulnerable
- Such information is commercially sensitive
- Raw data can easily be misinterpreted and needs to be contextualised, decoded and explained by adepts
- The data is only meaningful in relation to other information on building fabric, management and use

This Edge debate aims to establish the extent and type of information that needs to be available on the whole life carbon emissions of the UK's building stock if the design, construction and property industries are to stand a chance of achieving the target set by The Carbon Plan (2011) that "By 2050 the emissions footprint of our buildings will need to be almost zero".

Chair: Simon Foxell, The Architects Practice

Speakers: Doug King - Chief Science and Engineering Advisor to BRE
 + Prof. Tadj Oreszczyn, Director UCL Energy Institute
 + Lynne Sullivan – sustainableBYdesign
 + Richard Lorch – Editor Building Research & Information

The Edge is an inter-institutional ginger group involving CIBSE, ICE, RIBA, IStructE and the RICS and seeks to promote interdisciplinary co-operation between construction professionals. We seek to encourage change in the industry through intellectual debate, political lobbying and inter-institutional working. Synopses of previous debates are recorded on our website www.edgedebate.com

Venue: Ecobuild – Whole Life Carbon seminar stream, Excel Centre, London

Hashtag: #edgedata