
Session 4

Form to Future: Bringing Vision into Reality

Faiz Akhbar

Faiz, an urban designer, advocated for a paradigm shift in the real estate industry during his session, addressing key issues in construction, climate impact, and urbanisation.

1. Construction Productivity and Innovation

Faiz highlighted the stagnation in construction productivity over the past 50 years and suggests that adopting innovative practices could save up to US\$1.6 trillion annually. He emphasises the need for continuous refinement in building processes, using modularisation to optimise construction, reduce waste, and improve building configurations.

2. Climate Impact and Technological Innovations

The unsustainable carbon footprint of relentless development is critiqued, with a call for eco-friendly approaches. Faiz discussed the technological advancements like prefabricated construction and cross-laminated timber (CLT), stressing their role in promoting sustainability. However, he also pointed out the significant environmental costs associated with AI and data centres, which consume large amounts of energy and water, contributing to carbon emissions.

3. Urbanisation and Social Cohesion

Faiz examined the widening gap between prosperous and struggling communities due to rapid urbanisation. He advocated for designing inclusive public spaces that address diverse needs, counteracting the isolating effects of suburban living and ensuring equitable access to amenities.

4. Historical and Modern Urban Planning

Reflecting on historical urban designs, Faiz contrasted them with modern, car-centric cities. He proposed learning from past models to create better, people-oriented urban spaces, and suggests a medium-density housing model as a balance between high-density and low-density developments. This model aims to be low-maintenance, adaptable, and modular.

5. Master Planning and Closed Loop Systems

Faiz proposed a master plan for an 18-square-kilometer area, emphasising sustainable resource management through harnessing solar energy, managing waste, recycling rainwater, and emphasising energy from waste. He advocated for a closed loop system where waste is converted into resources like water and power.

6. Call to Action

Faiz stressed out the role of all stakeholders—developers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, investors, and academics—in shaping a sustainable future. He called for collective efforts to implement innovative and practical urban solutions that balance technological advancements with environmental stewardship.

In summary, the session integrated insights on construction innovation, sustainability, urban design, and the need for a collaborative approach to address contemporary challenges.