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IBP National Journalism Awards 2019
Architectural Writer of the Year –Tom Ravenscroft –Dezeen

Tom Ravenscroft is acting editor (and previously deputy editor) of Dezeen, the world's most popular online architecture, interiors and design magazine. During the judging period he helped Dezeen set the architecture and design agenda through his editorship, as well as his own reporting, features and opinion columns, which covered some of the most pressing topics facing the architecture industry today.

His contribution was crucial in making the twelve-month period ending 31 August 2019 Dezeen's most successful ever – the website recorded 26,221,913 users (up 4.44% from the previous 12 months) and 111,748,483 page views (up 5.93%) in the judging period.

Here are three story highlights that demonstrate Tom's invaluable contribution to Dezeen during this period:

"Viollet-le-Duc would not hesitate to build a new roof and spire"

The burning down of Notre-Dame was the biggest architecture story of the year. As part of our extensive coverage of the event Tom wrote this column as a lighthearted, but serious, look at what Viollet-le-Duc would do if he was in charge of rebuilding after the fire. The most popular story on Dezeen that week, the story pulled in nearly 30,000 page views on its own.

www.dezeen.com/2019/04/30/notre-dame-new-spire-roof-viollet-le-duc

"There's something seriously wrong with IKEA's most sustainable store"

IKEA is currently pushing its credentials as a sustainable retailer. As part of this move to be more environmentally friendly, the company built what it claims is its most sustainable store ever in Greenwich, London. However, to build this green store a sustainable supermarket, which pushed the boundaries of green commercial architecture, was demolished. This piece drew attention to this and questioned how we measure sustainability in architecture, becoming one of the most popular pieces of content we published on Dezeen this year with over 40,000 pageviews.

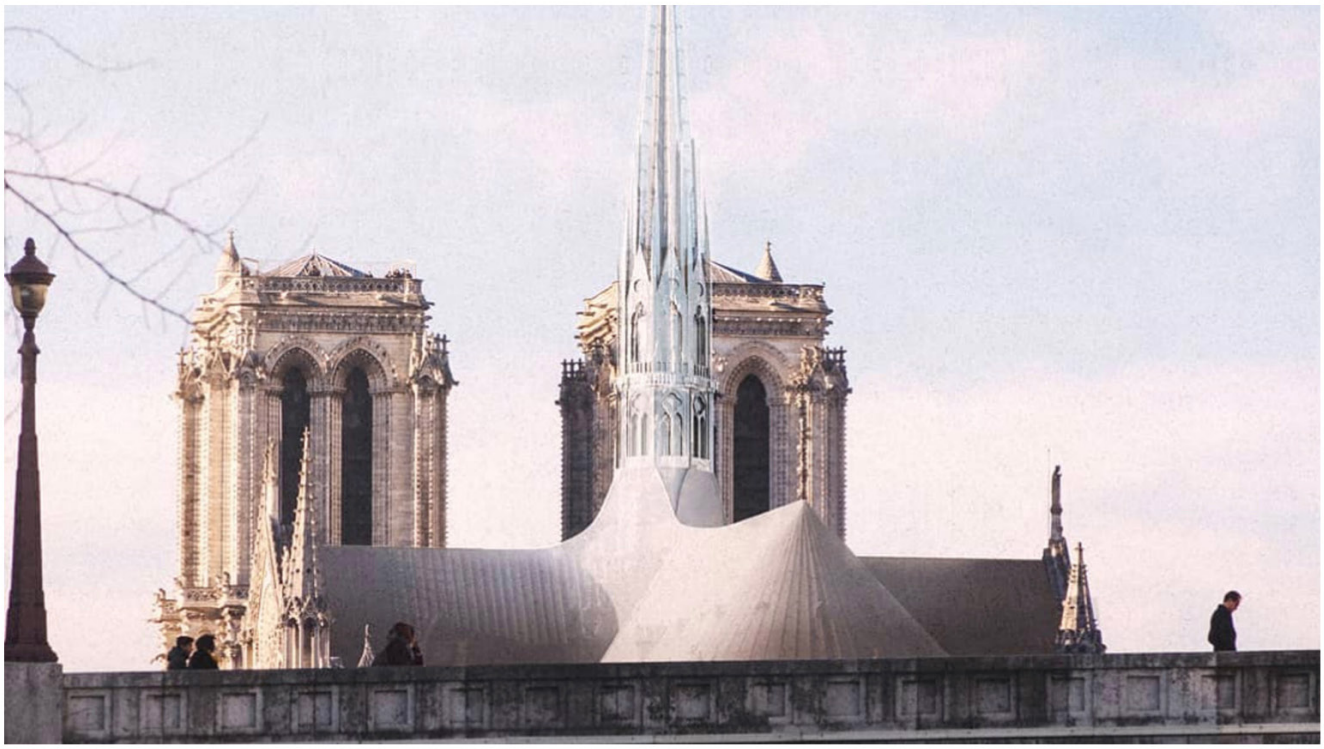
www.dezeen.com/2019/02/28/ikea-most-sustainable-store-greenwich-sainsburys-chetwoods-opinion

Biggest challenge of relocating Swedish town Kiruna is "moving the minds of citizens"

The government of Sweden is physically moving a town in the arctic circle. Kiruna has been wilfully undermined by the mine that is the reason for the town's existence. In this piece Tom drew parallels between the destruction of Kiruna and the damage we are doing to the planet. The problems Kiruna's urban designers faced in moving a community will have to be overcome by numerous coastal communities as sea levels rise.

www.dezeen.com/2019/02/18/kiruna-moving-town-sweden-mining-climate-change

Copies of each of the above articles can be found on subsequent pages.



"Viollet-le-Duc would not hesitate to build a new roof and spire"

Tom Ravenscroft | 30 April 2019 | 31 comments

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's Notre-Dame spire was much loved, but it was a fake. A modern replacement could become just as revered, says Tom Ravenscroft.

Notre-Dame Cathedral will be rebuilt. French president Emmanuel Macron has promised as much and the unprecedented donations, which stand at around €850 million, means that the will and the funds are in place. But the billion dollar question is: rebuild what?

The safest option would be to replace what was lost as faithfully as possible, using the closest available materials. Notre-Dame is one of the world's most recorded buildings and the data exists to recreate the cathedral almost exactly as it was, but in better condition with an enhanced structure and improved fire protection. The numerous problems – pressure to rebuild in time for the 2024 Olympics, availability of skilled craftspeople, finding 1,300 mature oak trees – would all be overcome.

Notre-Dame will be restored to its place at the heart of the French capital, but it can not be the same building as before the fire. Even if the cathedral is faithfully restored using materials and techniques from the appropriate time periods, they will be new materials and there is no escaping that it will be a replica.

Replicating what was there before was not the option taken by architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc when he restored the building 150 years ago, and it is not what we should do now.

> **'Viollet-le-Duc chose not replicate the original, but instead to reinvent the building with a new design to better fit his architectural ideals'**

When Viollet-le-Duc took over the restoration of Notre-Dame cathedral in the mid 19th century, it was, as it is now, in a ruinous state. After centuries of decline, culminating in significant damage during the French Revolution, much of the fabric was disintegrating and the building, just like now, was missing its central spire.

The original 13th-century flèche had been removed 60 years earlier to prevent it from

collapsing. Viollet-le-Duc chose not replicate the original, but instead to reinvent the building with a new design to better fit his architectural ideals. It was Viollet-le-Duc's gothic-inspired timber spirelet that was spectacularly lost in last week's devastating fire, and which people are now mourning.

His spire was something he believed the original builders would have created if they had the technology and the imagination. In his view it made Notre-Dame a more complete work of gothic architecture.

"To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time," wrote Viollet-le-Duc in his book the Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle (Dictionary of French Architecture from 11th to 16th century).

Viollet-le-Duc's fake spike enhanced one of Paris' most-loved buildings, and became much loved itself. A modern design to replace Viollet-le-Duc's 19th century intervention could do the same.

> **'We can be certain that if he had had to replace the entire 13th century timber roof in the mid 19th century, he would not have faithfully recreated the historic structure'**

Thanks to the work of the Paris firefighters, much of the gothic cathedral was saved. Most of the original fabric from the 12th, 13th and 14th century still remains. Notre-Dame's most important architectural features – its pioneering flying buttresses, which are early use of the structural technique – still stand, as does its iconic west front.

Faced with the current restoration, what would Viollet-le-Duc do? We can be certain that if he had had to replace the entire 13th-century timber roof in the mid-19th century, he would not have faithfully recreated the historic structure. As he did with his timber needle, he would have utilised modern techniques to create a roof that he believed best embodied gothic ideals, rather than a replica of what was lost.

"In such circumstances the best plan is to suppose one's self in the position of the original architect, and to imagine what he would do if he came back to the world and had the programme with which we have to deal laid before him," wrote Viollet-le-Duc.

Placed in charge of the current restoration, Viollet-le-Duc would not hesitate to build a new roof and spire. This seems to be the course that the French government is embarking on, with prime minister Edouard Philippe announcing a contest to design a new spire that will be "adapted to the techniques and the challenges of our era".

Philippe describes the hunt for a new design as an "evolution of heritage". Just as Viollet-le-Duc added to and improved the cathedral in the 19th century, a contemporary architect should design the next stage of the building's evolution. Viollet-le-Duc was only 30 when he took over the restoration project, and ideally a young architect will design the cathedral's next chapter.

This does not mean that the essence of the cathedral should be lost, or that the new elements should dominate the medieval building – repairing the damaged stone vaults with glass would drench the cathedral in light, ruining its atmosphere and impact of the famous rose windows, while an overly tall tower would completely change the composition of the west face.

Following Viollet-le-Duc's example, the new spire and roof should have an eye on the past but be a design of the present, be based on gothic principles but interpreted with a modern eye.

> **'Many people are already aghast at the proposed replacement spires that are emerging'**

This will be the most controversial option, given the cultural baggage the building carries and the expectation of donors who have pledged cash expecting restoration. Many people are already aghast at the proposed replacement spires that are emerging. As Viollet-le-Duc warned: "We must admit we are on slippery ground as soon as we deviate from literal reproduction; and that the adoption of such deviation should be reserved for extreme cases."

The combination of the country's most important building and a huge amount of donated money means Notre-Dame cathedral will be one of the most high-profile, most publicly scrutinised projects ever. And the donors, many of whom would have expected their money to be spent on a historically accurate restoration, may also be angered.

But high risk equals high reward. Paris has a history of taking occasional grand architectural leaps. These modern interventions, often into historic contexts, have often become the internationally recognised symbols of the city, none more so than the Eiffel Tower. This powerful 19th-century display of the engineering potential opened only 25 years after Viollet-le-Duc completed the restoration of Notre-Dame.

IM Pei's Pyramid at the Louvre and the Centre Pompidou are two more recent examples of the bold, modern interventions in the city. Building a modern spire at Notre-Dame would continue this tradition and could become just as loved as these monuments, or indeed Viollet-le-Duc's lost erection.

Visualisation is by David Deroo.

Join Dezeen's Notre-Dame Spire chat on Twitter, 15 May at 4 PM UK time with #dezeenchat ›

Read more: Architecture | France | Paris | Opinion | Notre-Dame

"There's something seriously wrong with IKEA's most sustainable store"

Tom Ravenscroft | 28 February 2019 | 17 comments

IKEA claims its latest London store is its greenest ever. But how can this be true if another green building was demolished to make way for it? asks Tom Ravenscroft.

Knocking down one sustainable building to build another is nonsensical. Still, this is exactly what has happened in Greenwich, London, where IKEA has just opened its latest retail outlet.

"IKEA Greenwich is our most sustainable store," reads the furniture company's website and the building sure is packed with sustainable features. But there's something seriously wrong. The white elephant in the room is that to build the store, IKEA demolished what was the UK's most sustainable supermarket.

Designed by London-based architectural practice Chetwoods, Sainsbury's Greenwich was lauded as a pioneering example of sustainable commercial architecture that pushed the boundaries of eco-friendly design at the end of the 20th century. It was the first supermarket to achieve an excellent BREEAM sustainability rating, with its green credentials earning it a place on the Stirling Prize shortlist – unsurprisingly the first and only supermarket ever to make the list.

However, only 17 years after celebrity chef Jamie Oliver opened the doors, it was demolished. In an instant not only was the building wiped away, but with it the idea that it was sustainable. As Laurie Chetwood told me: "Knocking it down knocks out the idea that it was a sustainable building. It makes a mockery of it all."

> **'IKEA has clearly put every effort into creating a environmentally friendly store'**

As a rule of thumb, the energy needed to construct and demolish a building is around 30 per cent of what's needed to run it over a 50-year lifespan. By demolishing the building much earlier than this, any environmental savings banked while running the building were wiped out. No matter how little energy the Sainsbury's building took to operate, in Greenwich a standard steel box that stood for 50 years would have been the

more sustainable option.

IKEA has clearly put every effort into creating a environmentally-friendly store. Designed by SRA Architects, the building looks on the face of it like you'd expect an IKEA to look. But behind its familiar blue face, it incorporates numerous green technologies: rainwater harvesting will contribute half the water used in the building, its circulation areas are naturally lit and LED lighting has been installed throughout.

Sainsbury's Greenwich, the UK's most sustainable supermarket, was demolished to build the IKEA store. Photo courtesy of Chetwoods

The store's sustainability agenda is most visible from the air. The roof is covered with 12,000-square-metres of solar panels, broken only by rooflights, and a 4,000-square-metre green roof – one of the largest in London.

However, even if it achieves the highest BREEAM rating as is expected, what has come before means IKEA's 'most sustainable store' can hardly be considered sustainable.

> **'The store could have been repurposed by another retailer, or converted for another use'**

Sainsbury's made the decision to leave the site as the building was no longer big enough for its needs and has instead built a new, larger store just down the road. According to the chain, the decision to close any store is "never taken lightly". It claims relocating has allowed it "to operate in an even more environmentally-friendly way".

The store could have been repurposed by another retailer, or converted for another use. But IKEA decided that, although the site was ideal for its first new London store in 14 years, the building was not.

"There must have been an alternative – it should have been retained and used by another retailer, or become a community centre or it could have made a good sports centre," said Catherine Croft, director of the Twentieth Century Society, which campaigned for the building to be saved.

The fact that IKEA chose this site means that the company has to bare some of the responsibility for the building's destruction. A brownfield site, or even one with a less sustainable building, would have been better – a point that was made by the building's lead architect Paul Hinkin at the planning inquest.

"To destroy a pioneering environmentally sustainable building and concrete over its garden after less than 15 years does not, as claimed by the applicants, represent sustainable development," he said. "To be sustainable IKEA should be encouraged to build on brownfield land."

Sainsbury's Greenwich had "sustainability in its DNA" said Laurie Chetwood. Photo courtesy of Chetwoods

While the IKEA may have passed BREEAM's sustainability test, does it push the boundaries of green design like the Sainsbury's did? Not only did it have add-ons like rainwater harvesting and solar power, but the entire store was naturally lit with large rooflights. As Chetwood puts it: "Sustainability was in Sainsbury's DNA".

It's hard to say the same about the IKEA, which for all intents and purposes is still a steel-framed box. "I get the impression that it's lipstick on the face of an elephant," added Chetwood.

'Any system that lets this happen is broken'

IKEA may argue that environmental building technologies have moved on, that the Sainsbury's was no longer a cutting-edge sustainable building. But under this logic, buying and scraping a new electric car every year would be sustainable.

Like its predecessor, the immediate sustainable credentials of the IKEA can not be doubted. However, the succession of decisions that have lead to it being built are certainly not.

Both IKEA and Sainsbury's may justify their actions as part of wider sustainability agenda. However calling either building sustainable now seems a stretch. Destroying one building to build another can never be for the good of the environment, and any system that lets this happen is broken.

The failure in Greenwich comes down to lack of flexibility, both with architecture and planning system. Architects should take note of what has happened in southeast London – even the most sustainable building can be demolished if it cannot adapt to new uses.

While both IKEA and Sainsbury's should be applauded for commissioning sustainable buildings, to relocate after such a short stint shows a lack of perspective and stewardship on behalf of Sainsbury's and IKEA. The decision to acquire a site with a young existing structure it did not want shows a narrow definition of sustainability. The fact that the planners allowed it highlights a system that still does not truly take sustainability seriously.

Green buildings can only be great if their lifespan is longer than flatpack furniture.

Photography courtesy of IKEA, unless stated.

Read more: Architecture | London | UK | England | IKEA | Opinion | Sustainable architecture

Biggest challenge of relocating Swedish town Kiruna is "moving the minds of citizens"

Tom Ravenscroft | 18 February 2019 | 11 comments

Human impact on the planet is forcing Sweden to relocate the town of Kiruna. The urban planners and architects behind the project say the biggest challenge isn't moving the buildings, it's bringing the community with them.

Sweden's northernmost town and its 18,000 inhabitants are moving two miles east, to prevent it slowly being swallowed by an underground mine.

The mining company, Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara (LKAB), and its owner, the Swedish government, are moving over 20 significant buildings from the old town of Kiruna to the new location, including its church, which was voted Sweden's most beautiful building. Each one is being completely dismantled and reconstructed.

The rest of the town is being built from scratch, with new buildings including a town hall designed by Scandinavian firm Henning Larsen, being created within a masterplan by White Arkitekter and Ghilardi+Hellsten.

The Henning Larsen-designed town hall will anchor the new town. Photo is by Peter Rosén

While physically moving the entire town is a complex, expensive and – at the moment – unique challenge, relocating the community is proving the harder task.

"The challenge for the city is not only about moving an entire city, but also moving the minds of citizens and creating a new home and identity," said the Henning Larsen team. "The opening of the city hall marks the beginning of the moving process and the opportunity for creating a new social identity for the city."

"Handling history and identity is the tricky part"

The key challenge for the architects and planners of the new Kiruna has been understanding the elements that contribute to the town's history and liveability. While physically moving structures is difficult, it is logistically simpler than understanding what makes a town somewhere people feel at home.

"The physical things are easy, in a way. Building a town hall is easy," explained Göran Cars, urban planner for the Kiruna municipality.

"For a person who has to move you can ask, what is important to you? That person might say, 'I want to have a city hall with these qualities', and that's simple. But then how can we also handle history and identity? That's the tricky part," he told Dezeen.

Kiruna's church is being relocated to the new town. Photo is by Heinz-Josef Lucking

Cars' team discovered that smaller and seemingly insignificant elements made a big difference to the sense of place. Predicting these was almost impossible. But by listening to residents, they were able to assess what things had the biggest impression on locals, and extended the scope of what needed to being moved.

"I was stupid coming up here, because I assumed that the way to maintain identity and preserve history was to move physical buildings," said Cars.

"We are moving the church. When I speak to people they say: 'Yes I know that, but what about a grave? How about the birches?' I didn't understand that. They are small trees! But they are 100 years old – as old as the church. I get the question time and time again: 'What about the birches?' So now we are moving the birches."

"Small artefacts can be very important in terms of something that is both identity and has history," he added.

Kiruna could be model for moving other cities

The state-owned mining company had been extracting iron ore from under Kiruna for almost 70 years. The outcome is that the ground above the mine is subsiding and will eventually swallow the land the town is built on.

The decision to move the town came in 2004, although the Swedish government was aware of the problem years earlier. As the first real-world example of a town of its size to be relocated, it could serve as a model for other cities under threat.

Kiruna's move is being funded by the state-owned mine, which is responsible for its undermining. Photo is by Johan Arvelius

Like Kiruna, many of the world's coastal communities have also been facing impending destruction for years.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that the predicted 1.5 centigrade increase in global temperatures will lead to an average sea-level rise of between 26 and 77 centimetres by 2100. Higher levels of global warming will cause greater thermal expansion of the ocean and increased ice melting, with a two-degree increase potentially leading to the melting of the Greenland ice shelf and a rise of up to seven metres.

Around the world, this now inevitable sea level rise will lead to the relocation of millions of people by the end of the century, with some of the world's largest cities, including Miami, Mumbai and Guangzhou, under threat. The Maldives is already predicted to be uninhabitable by 2100.

In the future, moving large numbers of people may need to become commonplace. Kiruna could serve as a real-world example of how to tackle the very real prospect of relocating towns and cities under-threat around the world.

"Kiruna doesn't serve as model financial model"

Cars pointed out that, while Kiruna can demonstrate the physical and emotional process of relocation, its financial model is unique.

The town is fortunate in that its destruction is directly related to the highly profitable vein of iron ore it sits above. By Swedish law, the mine has to fund the relocation and has amble funds – and future revenue – to do so.

For the world's coastal inhabitants the financial situation is not so simple. There is no cash-rich organisation behind the problem, and no one willing to pay for its solution. Rising sea levels are the result of the global population's actions, but the impact will be borne by coastal communities, cities and countries.

"Kiruna doesn't serve as a model in terms of financing," said Cars. "Its a very specific situation."

The original town hall would have been too expensive to move. Photo is by Arild Vågen.

Even with its funding covered, there are still strict restraints determining what can be moved in Kiruna. In the majority of cases moving is more expensive than simply building from scratch, meaning each building or item that is relocated comes with an additional financial burden to the mine.

"The thing is that if you have a balance in economy you should be extremely generous in what you move," explained Cars.

The only option for coastal communities would be funding from nation states. The likely risk is that countries with huge low-lying populations, like Bangladesh, will pay a huge price for impact of global pollution.

"I have had visits from a few countries that are facing this: Malaysia, some US states and the Netherlands of course," said Cars. "We discussed financial models and they all think that any option other than state or local or regional funding is not to likely to happen."

Urban planners can learn from Kiruna

Although it's not a financial blueprint, Cars still believes that architects taking on the challenge can learn a lot from Kiruna.

The key to its success, he claimed, will be the seriousness with which the urban planners have attempted to continue the town's legacy, while also providing high-quality new facilities appropriate for its current and future generations.

Communication also played a huge part, with residents constantly made aware of the ideas and plans, and invited to share their views on what the future town should be.

"What we have done correctly, is that we started with a dialogue," said Cars. "No drawings, no sketches, not a single bit of real detailed planning. Just listening. What are expectation, what is quality, what is attraction to people. Just listening and listening."

Main image is by Peter Rosén.

Read more: Architecture | Kiruna | News | Features | Climate change