2017/18 Mini-Project

The Edge, Amsterdam
Showcasing an exemplary IoT building

Final Report

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Abstract
The Edge is an office building in Amsterdam that was built with the Internet of Things (IoT) as its foundational principle. Despite not having used BIM in the initial stages of its planning and construction, The Edge showcases many of BIM’s post-occupancy benefits; serving as a unique example that operates to a predicted BIM Level 3 standard.

As digital built environments gain momentum, this paper seeks to develop a model case study template by considering a wide range of issues arising out of deploying IoT and BIM processes. By articulating emerging themes of big data, systems integration, risk sharing and building capacity for cross-disciplinary exchange, the report shares lessons from The Edge over its three-year operation period.

The success of The Edge was found to go beyond its use of cutting-edge technologies and was instead traced to effective communication between key drivers who championed and co-operated to realise diverse and original ideas.

This report identifies those key drivers, elucidates the synergy of their communication and presents lessons and limitations of this pioneering building in the context of digital built Britain.

Research Question
How can case studies of built examples incorporating smart technologies help further the adoption of BIM in building and industry?

Methodology
A mix of research methodologies was used for studying The Edge.

The research team comprising Dr Michael Ramage, Aftab Jalia and The Edge’s architect Ron Bakker, visited the building in January and March to study its facilities first hand.

Interviews were conducted with various persons associated with the design, planning and occupancy of The Edge and other smart buildings. The purpose of this was to understand the approach and experiences of key people at each stage of the project and identify challenges in rolling out IoT and BIM processes.

In order to contextualise The Edge’s achievements, parallels were drawn between similar software services across different geographies, such as Spacefinder at the University of Cambridge, as well as other international buildings, such as The Crystal in London, that also uses smart technologies and sustainable architectural solutions.

Secondary sources of literature were examined to understand the direction of BIM worldwide and in the UK industry through the various PAS 1192 documents and international publications proposing BIM’s benefits.

Conclusion
Despite not following BIM-prescribed processes in its planning and construction phases, The Edge is an exemplary showcase of an IoT building. Through its incorporation of technologies and successful use over
the past three years, it offers unparalleled lessons in big data management, building energy visualisation and performance, user profiling, building capacities across disciplines, systems integration and risk-sharing. These themes echo with those of BIM users thus showcasing a live example of possible benefits and challenges in BIM’s uptake.

Related and Further Work
This paper seeks to articulate the many features born out of pursuing an IoT building. There is scope to further examine The Edge through quantitative metrics against similar operations such as: energy visualisation, monitoring and management, predictive facilities management. The developers of The Edge are on schedule to inaugurate two new buildings in 2018 which they eventually wish to connect to compare with The Edge. As The Edge stood unchallenged in its capabilities when completed in 2015, metrics from new buildings will help researchers compare its relative performance for post-occupancy and energy usage.

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