

MediaCycle

A collaborative proposal from *Fourth Door Research*



What if computers had been invented, but the internal combustion engine hadn't?

Introduction - Designing the distributed cycle network

MediaCycle is a hybrid Cycle-Station/New Media building typology aimed at marrying constituent elements of *Fourth Door Research's Cycle Stations* concept with a distributed network of environmentally focused new media nodes. The design focus underscores relationships between lo-tech building design, materials and technologies and hi-tech communications media. It is a symbolic meeting space between the physical and virtual, in which the focus is on the environment of new media. *MediaCycle* acts as a specific platform for *Fourth Door Research's Cycle Stations Project*.

MediaCycle is relevant to a wide spectrum of geographical and socio-cultural contexts, with the emphasis on those where cycle culture is either well established or being established.



Part 1) MediaCycle – A ground-breaking multi-layered project drawing together art, architecture, new media, sustainability and the environment

The different layers of *MediaCycle* are outlined in the immediate sections below. This is followed in part 2 by more detailed descriptions of the core elements; hub and node.

1) Cycle Stations – Hub and Nodes

“The Cycle-Stations Project is exactly the visionary initiative that we badly need if we are to ever change the whole culture of travelling.” John Grimshaw – EX-CEO Sustrans

Cycle Stations are a new sustainable transport concept; the modern day eco-culture equivalent of a coaching inn or service station for national and other cycle networks. *Cycle Stations* fuse sustainably designed overnight and day, rest and relaxation hostel-type facilities with other features, so appealing to short, medium and long-distance cycling.

MediaCycle re-versions the *Cycle-Stations* concept into a fusion of dedicated sustainability-environmental focused new media hub and *Cycle-Station*.

Complementing the *Cycle-Stations hubs*, *MediaCycle* also foregrounds a network of nodes across a specific geographical and/or socio-cultural area located across a network of cycle paths. The nodes are smaller structures, and can emphasise functional, artistic, and/or environmental elements, highlighting a broad spectrum of content and function, connected to their contexts.

This distributed nodal network feature individual examples of an overall common theme (or themes), the ensemble of hubs and nodes are joined virtually by new media. This is *MediaCycle*.



II) Cycle Stations and the nodal network - A Sustainable Hive Mind

The *MediaCycle Cycle-Station* variant nodal and hub network highlights examples of the lo-tech, bio-based and place-related, in the physical domain, and the distributed potential of new media and the network in the virtual domain. The hubs and nodes operate as separate, individual entities and as a 'whole' connected ensemble, in effect a distributed physical and virtual 'hive mind.'

III) Cycle Stations and the edge of environmental education

One version of *Cycle-Stations* are as 21st Century educational hubs highlighting the environmental overlaps between the physical sustainable built environment - embodied in the *Cycle Station* - and the natural world, eg, the network of 'linear parks' - the broader ecology along and beside cycle paths – partially conveyed and communicated through new media.

The *MediaCycle Station* hubs and the nodes, and the cycle path network are envisioned as a distributed exemplar 'learning and teaching instrument.'

The *Cycle-Stations Projects* underlying holistic message – the close relation between sustainable transport and design/architecture embodied in a single building - is both vividly conveyed and extended by the additional new media dimension.

MediaCycle is a pioneering example of the integration of new media into the cycle network.

IV) Cycle Stations – Twenty-First century Eco-Tourism

MediaCycle builds on cycle culture and and leisure cycling as a core and growing aspect of 21st Century Eco-Tourism.

MediaCycle and the original *Cycle-Stations Project* demonstrate the potential for adding a complete new layer to cycle based Eco-Tourism, making and integrating cycle path networks, infrastructure and communications into a thematic and conceptual whole. *MediaCycle* is adaptable, and can be developed for a wide spectrum of Eco-Tourist contexts.



Part 2) Design ideas, examples and MediaCycle's hubs and nodes in further detail

MediaCycle – the Hub as hybrid design strategy - Hi Tech communications/Lo Tech building

MediaCycle hubs - fusing hi-tech media with lo-tech materials. The ecological stories told through new media are underlined by the sustainability story embodied in the physical building.

MediaCycle hubs - foregrounding low-tech materials as container for hi-tech new media communications.

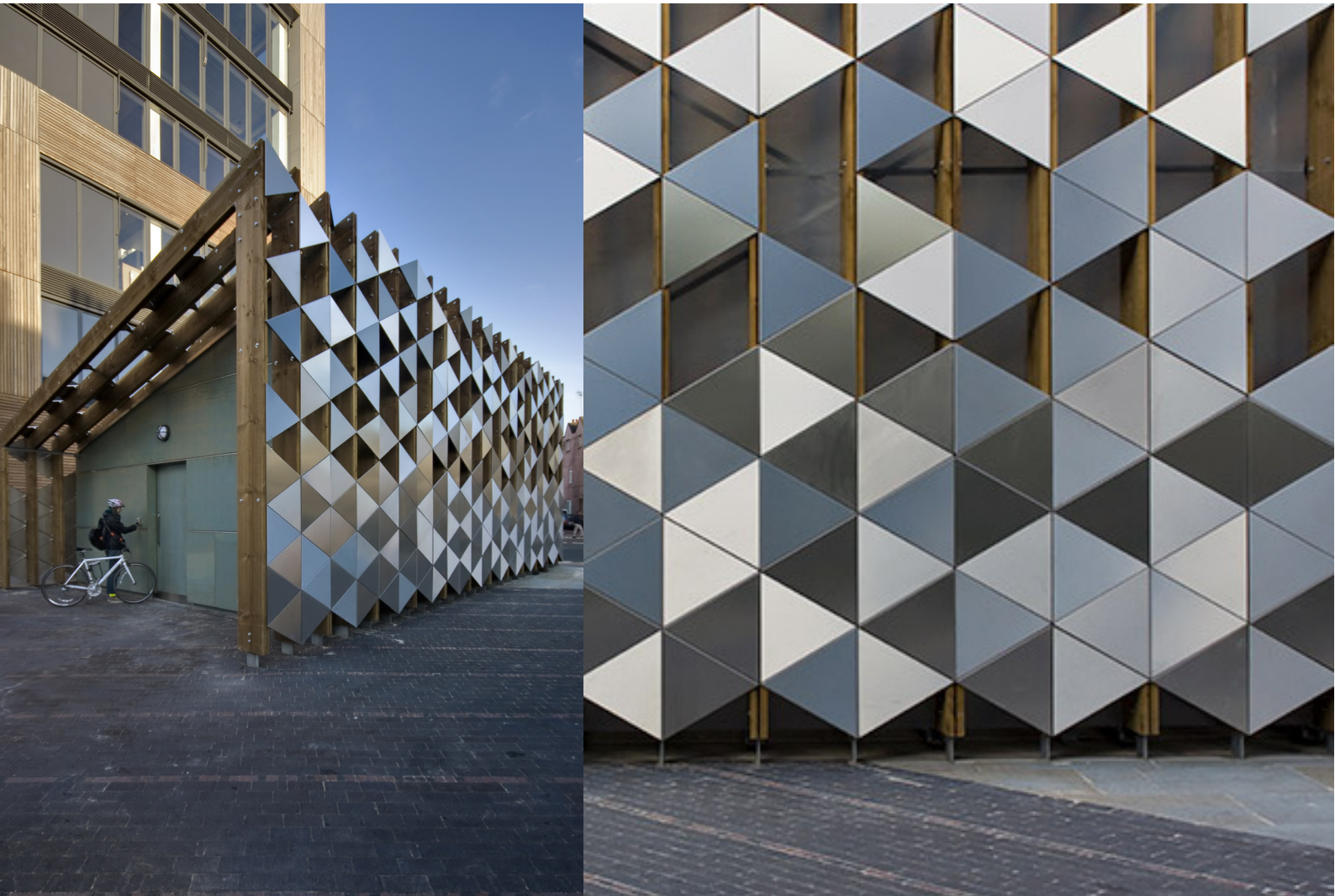
MediaCycle as 'Explorium' - a physical container and 'meeting space' between the physical and virtual.

MediaCycle hubs embody tacit and tactile experience, materiality, Genius Loci, and how natural environments root, anchor and enrich people's senses of place, and enable exploration of disembodiment, virtuality and virtualisation, and the emergence of network geographies.

Fourth Door Research has developed a broad spectrum of related proposals addressing *MediaCycle*'s design elements, both conceptual and pragmatic.

MediaCycle – the Nodes on the network

Many examples of *MediaCycle*'s nodes can be envisaged. The starting point comprise two core elements; the physical structures and specific new media examples and forms. *Fourth Door Research* has conducted considerable R&D across these fields



The Physical Nodal Structures:

Small shelters, cycle storage and repairs, rest stops, cycle infrastructure, cycle structural interfaces (eg, bus shelters + cycle storage)

- Art pieces and installations
- Nature viewing platforms, bird hides
- Place and mapping markers

All or a number of structures could highlight/profile specific natural, bio-based and bio-economy, materials technologies, and design innovation.

New/Social Media:

Examples include intelligent cycle path infrastructure/furniture.

Sound design and transmission informed by acoustic ecology

Sensor technology communication between physically distributed locations

Information and data art relating to the specific nodal contexts and the whole distributed *MediaCycle* project.

Art projects with a focus on new and social media application for conveying and enriching ecological understanding



Part 3) Realising MediaCycle

Fourth Door Research MediaCycle concept is a unique and original contribution to today's sustainability debate, rethinking and bringing new perspectives to the fusion of the sustainable built environment, new media and transport.

FDR is actively focused on finding contexts in which to realise the *MediaCycle* concept.

Within its broad conceptual agenda, *MediaCycle* is adaptable and flexible as a project proposal. It can be developed further within and for specific contexts and scenarios. *FDR* has developed a number of speculative specific scenarios to highlight the breadth of *MediaCycle's* application and relevance.

FDR has instigated the beginnings of a trans-disciplinary team, comprising leading architects, new media companies and academics, artists and environmentalists, engaged with and committed to realising *MediaCycle*.

For further information please contact: *Fourth Door Research*:
editorial@fourthdoor.org
00 44 (0) 1273 473501

This document – All Rights Reserved: 21st March 2015
Oliver Lowenstein, *Fourth Door Research*