



Season 1

Episode 3: Reimagining Arena Design

TRANSCRIPT

Sherry Privitera:

Welcome to drawing people together. The new podcast from populous, where we'll bring you insights, expertise, and ideas from the people at the forefront of global venue and event design. I'm Sherry Privitera senior principal at Populous, and I'm excited to be joining you for season one, Across six episodes. I'll be introducing you to my colleagues from around the globe who will lead deep dive discussions into the big issues and innovations that are shaping the design of large-scale venues, from stadium arenas to airport to convention centers to the super bowl and the Olympic games.

Nick Reynolds:

Hi, my name's Nick Reynolds. I'm a senior principal at Populous, and I'm delighted to welcome you to this episode of drawing people together today. We'll be exploring how arena design is adapting to meet the evolving needs of fans and performers. Joining me for this discussion, are three of Populous's leading architects in the field from our Kansas city office. We have Geoff Cheong.

Geoff Cheong:

Hey Nick, everyone. Thanks for having me.

Nick Reynolds:

And from London, we have Declan Sharkey

Declan Sharkey:

Hi everyone.

Nick Reynolds:

And from Brisbane, Andrew Noonan.

Andrew Noonan:

Hi everyone. And thanks having me.

Nick Reynolds:

Hi, welcome to all three of you. So I want start the conversation by establishing a bit of context for our discussion. I mean, arena design is probably the most fluid of all the building typologies that we specialize in, mostly because the content is constantly changing. I mean, you might have a gig one week followed by a sporting event, then a large scale entertainment show. And I mean, ultimately when you think about it, even the shows themselves are changing constantly during the event themselves. So I mean, Andrew, in your perspective, working within the Asia Pacific market, what do you think are the key drivers for an arena project and who are those drivers really dictated by for you?

Andrew Noonan:

This region is very broad and it varies generally from country to country, unlike the traditional arenas, where the arena floor and the bowl are designed around sports, typically ice hockey and basketball. We don't have that tribe so much here in Asia. And so our focus is more towards live entertainment rather than those arch typical sports, which provides us both with the challenge. Obviously, we need to think about how we approach the design differently, but also we need to consider how international touring groups need to set up their stage based on a typical arena

Nick Reynolds:

For you Geoff, I mean, the America's, market's typically been quite sports driven, but you were a key part of the project team for T-Mobile arena, which opened in Vegas in 2016 more recently you've led the design of the climate pledge arena, which opened its doors just last year in December. I mean, the projects are only five years apart, but we know they've been significant changes in society and the industry in terms of the client's requirements. How do you think things have changed in the last five years? And how's your approach changed to acknowledge that?

Geoff Cheong:

Yeah, I think Nick you're right about, you know, historically in the United States, the focus of arenas has in the past been sports, but I think we're certainly seeing that evolve into, you know, much of what Andrew described in Asia Pacific, that music and other shows and events are really driving these buildings. And I think in the last five years between T-Mobile arena and climate pledge arena, that's really become apparent, you know, our client in Seattle climate pledge arena, you know, before even talking about sports said, I want this to be a top five music venue in the United States. And so that was sort of an overall design goal from day one. So really I think key driver in our market today is music when it used to be sports in the past.

Nick Reynolds:

That's interesting and Dec in terms of outside of the traditional music and sports event, at least seeing new events come to the table, being considered in the early stages of projects.

Declan Sharkey:

That's a really good question, Nick. I think venues today have to be incredibly versatile. The venues that we have on EME at the moment, there's a need to accommodate eSports and there's a growing need to accommodate theater as well. So I think the venues are becoming incredibly flexible, but what a lesser focus on sport and a much greater focus on music, theater and eSports, I think to the point where, and co-op life, for example, the objective there is really to deliver a nightclub on a macro level and in many respects we're designing concert hall rather than the traditional arena. So I think there's been some significant changes over the last few years.

Nick Reynolds:

That's fascinating. I mean, I guess another big change that we are seeing at the moment, or I wouldn't say change cause it's been with us for quite a while, but one of the clear drivers is that sustainability has been this huge consideration in architecture. And I mean, Dec, you are leading the co live, which is a 23,000 seat arena in Manchester, which due to opening 2023 and sustainability, I know has been absolutely central to that project. And the client's been totally committed from the very outset to setting a new benchmark for what we call responsible venues. So what steps do you feel the team's taken to sort of rise to that challenge?

Declan Sharkey:

Again, like a very question. I think we've looked beyond just sustainability. I think sustainability can be quite ambiguous in many ways. So we've looked at accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability, and I think that the big, the smart move that our client has made, they've looked at holistically, not just how we deliver the building and we construct a building in the most sustainable way possible. Yes, it's a hundred percent electricity. Yes. We've got PV zero to landfill. We've dealt with single use plastic, but I think it's also looking at how we ultimately operate the building. And I think beyond that, I recently a conversation with live discussed, live touring program in, and really that's holistic approach that I think to where, and essentially gives everybody a platform that's allows them to select the most sustainable venue, but it deals with transportation. It deals with production, it deals with food, it deals with engagement with the community. So I think what they've done and coop live and the other venues very successfully is they've locked it holistically very much from cradle to grave and not just taking that piecemeal approach or a box ticking exercise.

Nick Reynolds:

And I'm assuming that's all part of the way of trying to achieve a net zero carbon building by 2038, because you know, that's the same timeline that Manchester city council have set for that to become a zero-carbon city. And I guess that's the thing that most people don't recognize or acknowledge with our designs is that, you know, the building itself was just one component. There's such a huge ecosystem that has to be considered, like you're saying like that green nation.

Declan Sharkey:

Yeah, exactly. And you need the support from the local authority and you need the surrounding infrastructure to support that. And you're completely right. That that's

the ambition of client and what if the support is there and the infrastructure is there. They're looking to deliver in that zero carbon building as early as possible, very much in keeping what the success of climate PLA arena in Seattle

Nick Reynolds:

And Geoff, I mean, climate pledge arena had similarly ambitious sustainability goals. And to what extent do you feel those ambitions are really client driven and how much of it is that ultimately the users in society are putting on? I mean, we often wonder ourselves that we, to what extent the fans and performers shaping the design of arenas rather than just the client's objectives themselves.

Geoff Cheong:

Yeah, absolutely. Nick you're correct. The client had very ambitious, very lofty goals at the outset of climate pledge arena that ultimately became even more ambitious, you know, midway through construction when they were navigating through a partnership agreement with Amazon and ultimately looking to brand the building climate pledge arena. And you touched on it, I think in a place like Seattle in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, the sustainability is really at the forefront of that community and that culture and the people that live in that part of the country. So, you know, I think the client's response is very much, you know, sort of catered to the population, the region, the locals. And I think that's what helped elevate it to the level that we've seen at climate pleasure arena. And like Declan mentioned, you know, you sort of have the standard sustainability features that you can sort of check the box as far as those are pretty common buildings today.

Geoff Cheong:

But I think it's really the unique aspects of climate pledge arena that set it apart and really make the sustainability story, like I said, authentic to that community. And by that, I mean really the story of preservation, what the project is all about. I think, you know, the fact that the 44 million pound roof was preserved, saved restored and all the associated sort of embodied carbon that was saved because of that. I think it's the biggest part of that sustainability story. And to go along with that is, you know, preservation of 60 year old mature trees and other landscaping around the site that had to be very painstakingly, monitored, and treated during construction in order to be preserved. So really, you know, careful measures were taken and effort was made to preserve the physical history and elements of that place. And, and then we've got some new, you know, you sort of coupled the history with some of the new and futuristic ideas and in a place like Seattle that has a reputation for being quite rainy.

Geoff Cheong:

A lot of the year, we sort of fell into a design concept of using harvested rainwater to actually create the NHL ice surface in the arena. And a lot of factors sort of had to align in order for that to become a successful endeavor. Nick, I think, you know, one of those being that the, you know, fortunately the hockey season, which is typically October through April the regular season for the NHL really aligns well with the rainy season in Seattle. And so, you know, an idea like that just naturally came together

where we can collect Seattle rainwater and turn it into the, the greenest ice in the NHL.

Nick Reynolds:

That's interesting. I mean, Andrew, I find it very interesting the way that you hit historically the cost of providing sustainable architecture was almost the barrier to taking that approach. But what we're starting to see with certainly with climate pledge and cope live is that actually taking a sustainable approach is actually driving the commercial revenues and actually playing a very positive role in generating the necessary returns for the building to be sustainable. In commercial terms, are you finding a similar situation in APAC in terms of how, you know, the approach you take towards these buildings is actually encouraging sort of commercial interests, both in terms of naming rights, but also in terms of the sort of participation of the audience in adopting the buildings.

Andrew Noonan:

That's really interesting question in our region. It's so varied and we don't have a straightforward singular drive that you might in more established venues or markets in Europe and America. And so we are having to attack the problem in a very different way, what we're seeing at the same time. However, is that the affordability of, of putting in sustainability measures and the social measures for the venues is becoming much more cost effective. This enables us to bring that into the design in a much earlier stage and preempt the social shift and commercial shift that will come as we know, it's already happening in some parts of the world. And that will happen really quickly here in Asia, the ideology shifts and the focus becomes more towards a sustainable future.

Nick Reynolds:

That's interesting. And I think also, you know, thinking of the, the different aspects that we associate with sustainability, I mean, we've talked a lot about coop live as being one of the healthiest buildings, and that was suddenly what we've all experienced over the last two years with the pandemic is that it made people reassess the environments that they experience public entertainment in. And I think, you know, part of our design strategy has always been this focus on providing a better quality of space, you know, looking at things like natural light air and sound quality, biophilic design, and integration with outdoor spacing and landscaping, that kind of blurring of the public realm that we experience are we music or our sports in, I mean, it's not a new concept within the industry, but we've certainly seen COVID 19 has sort of accelerated this adoption and we're all more conscious of the spaces we inhabit now. I mean, Dec, I mean, disregarding the short term measures have been put in place to slow the spread of the virus, et cetera. What do you feel the longer term impacts that you see the pandemic having on how we approach the design of arenas? I mean, this has been a big consideration, obviously for coop live.

Declan Sharkey:

I think if we started at a very basic level, it's just a space that we need around, outside the building. And you're completely right. It's about blurring that line

between the inside and outside. And as you know, it co-op live. It's about bleeding that landscape into the Concourse and allowing to, to open up, obviously the whole ventilation piece is a key pulling natural air into the building. So we've had to completely rethink that and bring in the most current technology co-op live. I think the other piece is technology. If we think about how we clean them and in the building, everything will be done robotically, which obviously helps with hygiene, cleanliness, et cetera. But I also think it's how fans start to engage with the building. And I'm gonna steal one of Geoff's great ideas from climate pledge arena here. If you think about the Amazon grab and goal concessions, I mean, very, very intelligent piece of software by you. Don't need to engage what people, when you're in the space, you essentially use your credit card, enter the space, select your food and leave, and that's charged to your credit card. So that's just a small example of the sort of technology that we're integrating that coop live at the moment

Nick Reynolds:

And Geoff in the Americas. Have you seen that sort of manifest itself in this whole sort of wellness concept, both with the clients and the buildings you're designing?

Geoff Cheong:

Yeah. I mean, very similar themes to what Declan described for co-op live. I think the no touch experience is definitely something that climate pledge arena has really focused on from a design and operations standpoint. So everything from security as you're entering the building, the way your ticket is scanned, they actually do all, all digital tickets. So holding your cell phone up to a scanner is now the way that you gain entry to the venue. There is no paper ticket. There is no exchange. You're not passing that to an attendant. Who's then scanning it, which is still sort of the standard in a lot of the industry. So really this no touch experience I think, is occurring from the moment you step foot on site, all the way through like Declan mentioned food and beverage experience, retail experiences, and then, you know, towards the end of the event when you're heading out at the building.

Geoff Cheong:

So I think that's a big part of it. Declan touched on mechanical systems. I think maybe since I've spent the last decade of my career focused on national hockey league buildings, you know, mechanical systems sort of does come to the front of my mind as far as wellness and, and health of buildings, because I think they're inherently sort of superior venues when it comes to their mechanical systems, just because of the nature of they have NHL quality ice. And so from a temperature humidity and ventilation control standpoint, these NHL venues are really dialed in. I think that gives a lot of H rooms visitors to NHL hockey buildings, a lot of comfort in their attendance to that particular event, you know, unless you're seeing fog over the ice, which you won't in an NHL building, I think you can rest assured that you're within a very well ventilated space and then at climate pledge.

Geoff Cheong:

Again, maybe just from a wellness standpoint, you touched on sort of the daylight component. I think one of the byproducts of saving that historic roof and the glass

facades was, and by the way, it sort of, the historic building was a pretty tight 360 square footprint to sort of jam the seating bowl within that and accommodate 17,000 seats. We actually, you know, placed it right up against that north glass facade. And it's an expansive sort of picture window that daylight the bowl during non-event times, they don't really need to turn the house lights on for regular day to day operations. And, you know, we've heard the comment several times from our client and operators and other folks in the building that we need to put windows in all these arenas. It just really changes of the atmosphere and, and

Nick Reynolds:

The environment. Yeah. The area, the black box is well and truly over isn't it obviously is for the, in the performance environment. But certainly, I mean, we're seeing over and over that this desire to, to let light in, even in obviously, you know, less attractive climates, I would say there's this same desire to certainly break the building down and give more of a kind of natural experience, I would say agree. Yeah, it's fascinating. I mean, keeping the focus on interior spaces, when you look at our recent projects like climate pledge and coop live, and I mean, compared to the venues of sort of 10, 15 years ago, I'm always struck by the phenomenal amount of choice that we get in these buildings for spectators bars, theme space is more choice of food. I mean, Dec, what do you think the trends that you're seeing in, in this area and how much work really goes into tailoring that offer for different arenas based on the geographical location or specific needs of the local communities. So that we really are talking about a bespoke solution in every case,

Declan Sharkey:

This always brings back a very fond memory. Nick, I don't know if you remember, I remember traveling to New York, would you? And we want the visit a venue in New York as a young architect back then, I remember walking into the Concourse and seeing a barber shop in New York and thinking, wow, and fast forward, probably 12, 14 years now. And you get some of those really quirky offers within an arena, but you're right. When you look at a venue 10 or 15 years ago was very much about general admission club and lots of suites. As we all know, that's dramatically changed. And some of our venues right now we've between 15 and 19 different offers. And it's really to give that incredible experience to the different fan types. If we take co-op live, for example, we've got two clubs right down at event level that essentially give the fans that kinda connection with the, and the artist, as well as this incredible nightclub space that can continue functioning into the smaller of the morning.

Declan Sharkey:

And then as you work your way up through the building, we've got these incredible pockets of experience within the bowl, but also behind it again, sticking co-op live, we've got two incredible hangout spaces up at the back of the tier stage, right? I stage live. And again, they provide an incredible vantage point and it's very much appealing to the Instagram generation, the folks that want to be there, but don't necessarily want to see every detail. But your point about the amount of work, I think at populous, we're very much at the forefront of determining some of these trends. I think a huge amount of work goes into determining what the appropriate experience

is, but also what the right business model is, what generates revenue, but also what's right for that market. And what I find about a lot of ours today, they have to work on a level.

Declan Sharkey:

So of course they have to be global. They have to attract some of incredible artists. They have to work for their sponsors, but equally they really have to work for their local market and their local community. They take co-op live. For example, it's very much rooted in Manchester. That role industrial approach is the main driver, right through everything, all of those 19 different offers that I just alluded to. So I think the venues are to do a huge amount and populous, but a significant amount of effort, what our clients, into determining those different functions and experiences.

Nick Reynolds:

Yeah, it's so true. Isn't now, I mean, Geoff, you finding, well, personally, I'm finding that we are really talking a lot, the conversations, a lot more about catering for different demographics and the needs of different users and the, even within a building, even within the demographic band that the demands and requirements change, depending on whether we are talking about an eSports event or whether we're talking about the sports event or a live concert. I know from seeing the projects that you guys have been working on and also from working on a project in Vegas, that can be so different in Vegas or in Seattle versus in London. I mean, we literally have to sort of re imagine the experience from day one. We can't sort of repeat initiatives or design cues that we put in one building and then just translate it into another.

Geoff Cheong:

No, I think you, we're always pushing to really transform or evolve those ideas. I agree, Nick, and really that's the expectation of our clients. They will like what they've seen in other buildings around the country, and then they'll want to, you know, sort of us on what the next best or the next version of that idea is. And so I agree with Declan, we are at the forefront of sort of creating these new experiences in Seattle. We imagined very similar to a couple of the spaces Declan described, basically what we call standing room only environments that accommodate quite a few folks, you know, up to 300 in this one, as we call the space needle club that actually don't have a view down to the event floor. So, you know, it's an experience ticket. They are sold out constantly for that club environment and it's designed and catered to that user.

Geoff Cheong:

That wants to be a part of the experience and the energy surrounding an event, be in a social environment, something that has a little bit more than just your bar or club downtown it's associated with an event and a brand, but they'll pay to be in the venue and not be able to have a seat or not necessarily see the action. So I think we've seen that actually in a couple of our recent arena projects become more and more successful. And I think we're gonna continue to see that trend grow as far as sort of the standing room or exp types of environments.

Nick Reynolds:

I think the big change that I've noticed over the last 20 years is awareness of venues. Whereas if we wanted to know what the latest arena trends were in the us, for example, we'd have to get on a plane like Dec says, and visit every single building. And I think it's so true now from a designer's point of view, but also from a fan's point of view, that there's just this total awareness of the quality of other buildings all around the world, the experiences that can be had in all other buildings, not just arenas, but every type of public experience, every aspect of experiential design. So with that level of awareness, you have to keep pushing them boundaries. You have to give them something new every time you have to keep re-imagining what that experience could be. And I guess Andrew, I mean, that takes us to the heart of the arena, which is traditionally the seating bowl. And how do you feel that's really evolved over your time as an architect and how do you see it really evolving and taking the next leap for the next big innovation in the arena design?

Andrew Noonan:

Generally, what we've seen is getting people closer to the content and having more intimacy in event seems to be something that's happened a lot recently, there's been an increase in diversity options and to move away from large chunks of GA seats into more intimate and exclusive sections of seating. And like Geoff was, I think there's a climate pledge. It's not necessarily being able to see the stage for an entertainment event. Obviously the sports based side of arenas, you need to have that more, but in Asia, it's definitely a lot more towards entertainment. And so we can start to see more of a breaking down of the seating bowl and creating more intimate spaces, ultimate lead, where we'd like to get to is having a sort of a transformer arena that, you know, the stings can drop and the both sides itself could shift. And each of those could provide their own exclusive or marketable space that could be branded for different markets or different audiences. Obviously we need to test these new ideas and see if they translate to the types of events that they have and even test how they can compliment these events.

Nick Reynolds:

Did you have something to add to that Geoff,

Geoff Cheong:

One thing I just wanted to mention as it relates to sort of the seating environment, the seating bowl. I think that what we're seeing here in the United States is just a real focus and heightened awareness on sort of the intimacy of venues. Like I mentioned, at climate PLA arena, we did sort of physically have to compress the bowl to fit within the historic confines or the historic footprint, but even in UBS arena or other recent arena projects, there has been an incredible focus on getting people closer, closer to the action over top of the action. I don't think there's really any downside to having better proximity to the event or the action on the

Nick Reynolds:

For and Andrew. I mean, it's, I mean, from my experience, seeing some of the buildings in Asia, the opportunity to expand the AMAT concept and really plays into

the, some of the things you were mentioning in terms of getting people closer and increasing that sort of intimacy.

Andrew Noonan:

Yeah, absolutely. Nick, as I mentioned in Asia, as we don't have the sporters, the primary focus or function of the building or the design criteria, in some cases we don't have to design the sport part at all. It's purely entertainment. We are able to use that am theater style really in a clever way to, to scale the venue. So that could be transformable seating, being able to move the seats closer or further away as the venue needs. We've had a few discussions throughout the region about having ceilings that drop and really getting it all much tighter than it used to so that we can have a variation without the sport focus as well. The seating bowls Sightline criteria is changed completely. So, so constrained by the need to see on single focal point. In fact, we've had interesting discussions and studies here about how or where we determine the focal point for seating balls in that case, because it's no longer on the ground and it's somewhere up in the air so that you can see the performer, but which part is the most valuable to see or desired to see is something that needs to be more considered and has been an interesting thing to look into.

Nick Reynolds:

Yeah, I think that's fascinating. I mean, in my experience I've found that there's typically a couple of key drivers in terms of the seating bar. You rightly pointed out the content that a seating ball is addressing is one of the key factors that drives our design. But I think historically, and oh, two is a good example. There's this push and pull between seats that are on manifest and off manifest. And I think, you know, historically when you looked out into a seating bowl, there was this natural division between those seats that were part of the house and located within boxes and club seats. And those that were part of the, you know, on seats, which are historically the GA seats and the seating and the event floor. And I think what we're starting to see is this transition between those seats suddenly becoming hospitality opportunities and work very differently with the seats and the hospitality experiences that you see behind the seating bowl, which then frees up the bold design itself. I mean, Declan, we talked about this a bit, and exploded certainly at coop live and projects we've done more recently. And as the owner takes a more flexible view or a slightly different commercial approach towards the off manifest seats, it gives us more freedom as designers. Doesn't it?

Declan Sharkey:

Exactly. I think one of the points too, I completely agree what the flexibility and the need to be transformer like, but the other key change is the need to deliverable with a really strong identity and personality. Traditionally, we would talk about the venue externally needing a very strong identity. And when we look at the likes of Madison square garden or MSG spheres, they have a very strong personality, but I think there really is a desire now for the auditorium to have an equally strong identity. And that often starts with, is Nick alluded to some of the opportunities like having standing Decs within the bowl, but it's also how we treat the actual ceiling and how we treat that. It's something I think our clients are starting to demand a little bit more, we're all aware of the garden and the beautiful timber roof, and that gives it a really strong

identity. So I think that's a trend that's coming in more and more, and we will ultimately have to respond onto.

Nick Reynolds:

Yeah, I guess that's also a feature of the shows themselves aren't they, because traditional music event used to be with a fixed focal point. Everybody looking at an end stage scenario, everybody's eyes away from the roof traditionally, and then the concerts and the events these days, the performers in 3, 4, 5 different positions at any one time during an event, you know, whether it's pink on trape or thrust stages or stages within the audience. And the moment you do that, everybody's, Sightlines everybody's view is all around the internal bowl environment. And it means you have to address different elements. Doesn't it? You mentioned the spheres and the technology in them and minute ago, I mean, looking ahead for me, it's very clear that music and live entertainment, it's moving towards a place where for those that aren't lucky enough to be in attendance in the venue, we'll be able to purchase tickets for a virtual gig or event, something tailored specifically to remote audiences that goes beyond just a very simple live stream. And that may well be one of the approaches that we take to using the carbon footprint of our live events as well. I mean, Andrew, how do you see designers responding to be able to support both the event within the building, but also the virtual event that's taking on outside?

Andrew Noonan:

Yeah, that's a great question, Nick, especially with a lot of the discussion around building in the metaverse these days for us, you know, there's a complete ability, a have a entirely digital experience with via headsets where home event is online in a, not a real building, but there's also the possibility to use the existing venues that we have and connect them with other venues so that you might have a concert say in one arena and then another around the country or within the city that could be live streamed into sort of a more virtual experience that still brings people together. Because I think the event and coming together and the social aspect is something that's very key to these events rather than sitting at home, watching them by yourself, which is the traditional streaming model. So there needs to be something that we have to consider there in terms of what is that extra journey or the extra bit of interest that helps that event means something more to people who aren't there in the virtual world.

Nick Reynolds:

I guess also in a way that VR is unlocking the, the multidimensional venue is so, I mean, we have the physical environment that can be streamed, but at the same token, VR allows us to create a whole new environment for those that are experiencing a concept through a headset. Yeah, I'm fascinated by the idea that, you know, a band that has a following of maybe 20,000 devoted followers online, but a who distributed all around the world could attend one's single event together in a VR environment, which in other scenarios, that band is traveling around the world playing to audiences of a hundred people. And do you feel Geoff that, you know, the way we're heading and the way technology is heading that POPULOUS will be designing physical and digital venues and they won't necessarily be the same, but they'll be providing a canvas for people to enjoy in many different ways.

Geoff Cheong:

I think so, Nick, you know, I think that's a really sort of exciting future to think about for our practice designing for the virtual fan or the virtual event. You know, I think one thing that I've thought about is, and this goes back to the opening concert at climate pleasure arena, which was Coldplay who live streamed their concert on Amazon prime globally. So they had millions of viewers tuning into the show, whereas they were only, you know, 17,000 in the actual building. But I think what stood out to me from that live stream was the architecture was still a focus of that broadcast. They started with the drone sort of fly over from the space needle, one of the historic other world's fair icons, the observation tower, and zoomed down basically around the arena, highlighting the roof. And you know, what I started to think about was even in a digital event environment, I like as human beings, we're still gonna want to experience some sort of a journey almost like if I was getting up off my couch, what would my journey to, and from this event look like, and I think that's an important part for us to think about.

Geoff Cheong:

It's not just capturing sort of that moment once you're in the, the bowl environment or the band is on stage, how can we create a journey to, and from that space in a digital environment that is unique and authentic and inspiring, and what can that become without limitations of the physical world, right. You know, it's a dream line, what does that journey become? And I think it just can't really contain my thoughts as far as what that could be in the future. So, Hey, that'd be a cool design challenge or exercise to be of. And certainly think it's part of our future.

Andrew Noonan:

I just wanted to add too, I guess if you look at that model and the idea of linking up multiple venues as well, so that you might have regional arena around as well as the one where the concert is and the virtual world, it gives you the opportunity to have special digital content like meet and greets with the artists before the show that while they aren't physical, they provide a genuine interaction for audiences that may otherwise not have the ability to access that special package. And that can extend through many different media.

Nick Reynolds:

Yeah, you've got this perfect model of an artist playing to 20, 25,000 people in one venue. Then that being streamed to perhaps half a dozen regional popup sites. And then you've got your virtual audience of maybe a further select, you know, million that have bought their ticket via NFTs, for example. And it's a wonderful kind of image to have, particularly when we start talking about sort of these highly technical plug and play venues. I mean, just closing really Dec if you've come across similar sort of ideas as Geoff describing.

Declan Sharkey:

Yeah. I think the opportunities are endless and a bit that really intrigues me is delivering our venues in a metaverse. And I think I've been really intrigued by the global partnership between Manchester city football club and Sony, where will

deliver the athlete stadium in a virtual world. And you'll be allowed to engage with it in that way. And I think the opportunities around venues and entertainment and music is endless. It's phenomenal, Nick, you and I worked on a project many years ago where conceptually, we were bringing 450 million spectators into one stadium in a digital and a virtual way. And that when it comes to music values, I think is incredibly exciting. The other piece that I think is really compelling is we often get asked the question, how would we deal with a future pandemic? And again, there's lots of work to be done there, but is that the part of the solution?

Declan Sharkey:

It's clearly not the solution, cause we all want to go to the venues. We wanna touch the venues. We wanna be with our friends, but is that part of the solution whereby you can attend an event and a metaverse and adopt a persona for that particular show. And I think for us at populous, the opportunities are endless because we create that digital model. So in many respects are design as a, in a metaverse before it becomes physical. So I think the opportunities are very, very exciting and I'm sure working together with our clients, we could deliver something phenomenal.

Nick Reynolds:

Well, that's a perfect way to end the discussion today with a look to how arenas of the future will be a seamless combination of the physical and digital world like to thank Geoff Declan and Andrew for joining us on the panel. And thanks for listening. We'll see you next time.