The Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s fourth Annual Summit was held on June 22, 2016 at Abbey Road Studios, London. The iconic venue, pivotal in 20th century music history, was fittingly the first from which the Foundation broadcast the Summit proceedings to CE100 organisations across the world. This livestream “View from the Summit” included additional discussions with presenters and other guests during breaks in proceedings to garner initial reactions to the subjects discussed and to further the conversation.

SUMMIT THEMES: DESIGN, REGENERATE, SCALE

As if amplified and fed through an echo chamber, the circular economy framework continues to gain resonance on global corporate, policy making and academic stages. The summit confirmed the steady increase in volume of the concept, which is becoming much more audible in the field of economic innovation, having reached new levels of definition and clarity.

It has indeed been revealing to note that the term ‘regeneration’, which lies at the heart of the circular economy, was central to the overwhelming majority of the conversations at Abbey Road studios. From the built environment to textiles, and of course in the food systems panel, the notion of an economy that builds capital rather than relies solely on extractive practices was pervasive. Enabled by the tidal wave of digital technologies, our relationship to assets, products and materials is being disrupted, offering a wealth of design opportunities. As boldly expressed by Arup Chairman Greg Hodkinson, alluding to the present speed and scale of urbanisation unprecedented in human history, “We have one generation to get it right”. This was an important reality check regarding the sheer velocity of the transformation at play, and a reminder of the opportunity to make it one guided by circular principles in order to achieve positive, resilient outcomes.

And if we have one generation to kickstart a global regeneration, surely the role of education is absolutely crucial to avoiding the creation of “accidental reductionists”, as Jane Drake from the International Baccalaureate Organisation put it. As the opportunity to create an economy capable of working in the long term becomes increasingly evident, the call for a 21st century education system underpinned by a cross-disciplinary, enquiry-led approach to solving complex problems gets louder.

PRESENTERS

DESIGN
Gregory Hodkinson, Chairman of Arup
Cyrus Wadia, VP Sustainable Business & Innovation, Nike
Joe McGee, EVP Strategic Planning & Development, Jabil

REGENERATE
Leontino Balbo, EVP, Balbo Group
Hunter Lovins, President and Founder, Natural Capital Solutions
Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair, UNEP International Resource Panel

SCALE
Jenna Jambeck, Associate Professor, University of Georgia
Pete Myers, CEO & Chief Scientist, Environmental Health Science
Rob Opsomer, New Plastics Economy Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation
Jane Drake, Head of Curriculum Innovation & Alignment, International Baccalaureate Organisation
FOUNDATION UPDATE
In keeping with the theme of scale, the Foundation has increased its size and scope this year. In a step change to its partnerships the Foundation has welcomed Google, H&M, Intesa Sanpaolo and Nike as new Global Partners; SUN (Stiftungsfonds für Umweltökonomie Nachhaltigkeit) as a Core Philanthropic Partner; and Arup and Ideo as new Knowledge Partners. The CE100 programme has established local CE100 networks in the US and Brazil and has underway a number of very active pre-competitive collaboration initiatives. The education programme has expanded through partnerships with new Pioneer Universities, and the circular economy is being formally included in the International Baccalaureate curriculum. In a major shift, the Foundation has set up its first systemic initiative, the New Plastics Economy initiative, which we believe has the potential to significantly impact the global plastics sector and also pioneer a new way of working and collaborating. It was launched in June following the successful publication of the New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics report at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January.

E-LEARNING
Access to the Foundation’s recent insights and a full palette of circular economy concepts and case studies is now available to all CE100 members through the Foundation’s e-Learning tool. It enables members to bring to scale in their organisations the big ideas that brought participants to the Summit, and comprises four modules with a total run-time of less than 90 minutes. Unilever, Schneider Electric and Philips are already rolling out the tool to engage every corner of their organisation in the harvesting of the collective intelligence of all functions.

The CE100 team can help you embed it in your organisation too - contact Andreea Muresanu (andreea.muresanu@ellenmacarthurfoundation.org) for more details.