



Architecture, The Climate of the Future, 30 November 2015, Paris

Speech by ACE President Luciano Lazzari

As COP21 begins here in Paris and we all expect some positive results, I have reason to be optimistic and I would like to underline four points:

The problem of global warming has finally been recognised

Today, 97% of science is firmly convinced that climate change is happening and is reality. Well-known and influential sceptics like Bjorn Lomborg, Michael Hanlon, Dmitri Medvedev came around and said "You were right, I was wrong". We have Barack Obama and the Pope on board. What better way to have this combination of the divine and the temporal?



Politics is driving the issue

Politicians are too often short-sighted – they tend to look just to the next election. I am happy to see new decision-makers and Ms Delli has demonstrated this here today, coming on board with long-sighted vision.

The European Union has particularly showed a strong leadership. From 2010, the EU has adopted the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED); the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD); the Commission has taken legal action against Member States, which have not complied with EU law.

We have to bear in mind that only 4% of new buildings will be built in Western Europe – compared to 10% in Middle East, 15% in the US and 38% in China. Europe has however a higher potential for retrofitting. This is something we need to concentrate on: retrofitting existing buildings, urban regeneration, re-using all the buildings that are misused, under used or non-used. We need to regenerate what we have.

This is something we are already doing well in Europe. Our cities have very positive footprints, for example if we compare Barcelona and Atlanta: both have roughly 5 millions inhabitants; one is spread over 4280 km², the other one over 162 km²; one consumes 7.5 tons co₂, the other one 0.7 ton.

To end off, I would like to recall that incentives and tax rebates on sustainable restructuring are working very well in many countries and this is something that must be developed by our administrations at all levels.

Other problems that we face pale into insignificance

Regional conflicts, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, territorial conflicts: when we face global annihilation, this would disappear. The whole world is at risk.

The first problem will be food: by 2050, rice is due to increase in price (35%-37%) and drop in production (10 to 15%) with the current effects of global warming. A majority of the world rice



production is at sea level, the Mekong delta is an example, and therefore at enormous risk because of rise of the sea level. Global famine would truly be disastrous.

A two degree rise in temperatures was seen as problematic, now it has become acceptable as an achievable target – let us remember there are no further margins for error.

This shows the importance of re-discovering inclusion, solidarity and human values.

Responsibility of the Profession

The third pillar of ACE used to be called “Sustainable Architecture” and has become “Responsible Architecture”. I think this is a key word. Responsibility is about what we do. We have to be ethically responsible, economical responsible, emotionally responsible, politically responsible and in the end humanly responsible.

We have to realise that what we do affects every single human being on this planet. We affect the way they work, they study, they sleep.

Sustainable construction is responsible construction – it is not new, in fact it has been done for thousands of years and most of it is sheer common sense. Chimneys and leaky windows provided natural ventilation, walls were thick, windows were small, material were local. Now we have thin walls, thick windows, houses that are sealed shut and people are discouraged to even open a window! We have history, we have a memory, Kjetil Thorsen has shown the value of listening to experience – this is what it is all about – rediscovering the essence of construction and not the essence of commerce or fashion.

Our Sector Study survey shows that in Europe, only 10% of clients ask for high energy performance buildings. This is where our responsibility must come to play. We are the only profession, which has this holistic vision of the whole process of building. We are not the only one, but we can co-ordinate.

They are 565.000 architects in Europe, 1.2 millions engineers, plus millions of technicians.

What can they do if they all work together with a common goal?

I would like to see a future where Architects would be universally recognised as a large part of the solution, a future where an architect could have the same credibility as a doctor on the scene of an accident and can confidently say: *I am an architect, I can help.*

In 2014 ACE created a focus group on Climate Change to plan an European architect's Campaign to mitigate Climate Change. This is a challenge we take seriously.