GLOBAL CONFERENCE 2014 - REPORT

« An inconvenient urban future. Social challenges builders versus big metropolitan plans and investments »

Speakers :

- Mr. Brian Kilkelly: Chief executive, World Cities Network
- Ms. Tita Larasati: General Secretary, Bandung Creative City Forum

Moderator :

- Mr. Nicolas Buchoud, Founder, Renaissance Urbaine; President, The Grand Paris Alliance for Sustainable Investment

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When we talk about sustainable development, citizen commitment cannot be separated from governments and the private sectors' actions.

Actions implemented by the private and the public sector do not meet the citizens' expectations anymore.

Citizens commitment is a way to relieve the private and the public sectors' failures. However, a climate of trust and confidence as well as collective consciousness are essential to ease this commitment.

The aim of this Face to Face was to confront two visions that are often contrasted: bottom-up citizen and social commitment, based on sustainable programs on the one hand, financial and technical engineering programs as well as facilities construction policies on the other hand.

The question is to know how we can organize the debate between this two relevant approaches knowing that the stakeholders need investments for their infrastructures. In fact, when we talk about sustainable development, citizen commitment cannot be in conflict with the financial and the technical aspect. We have to seek how we can establish synergies between these two parts.

Mrs. Tita Larasati was advocating the Social Agenda and M. Brian Kilkelly the green agenda. The moderator, Mr. Nicolas Buchoud, specialized in urban issues played the role of matchmaker and was in between the two visions.

The session started with the broadcasting of a video explaining the action of the Bandung Creative City Forum in Indonesia, represented by Tita Larasati.

Then Mrs. Larasati started to precisely explain that she can from Indonesia to attend the meeting because this kind of event was a good example of how people could gather and produced bottom-up initiatives.

The Bandung Creative City Forum, created in 2008, is a voluntary organization based in Bandung, the 3rd city of Indonesia. The organization started by gathering more than fifty associations and individuals coming from different backgrounds, and its aim was to stand against the town policy as well as proposing new alternatives. The Bandung Creative City Forum includes 250 cooperative programs and some are international. Furthermore the former director of the Bandung Creative City Forum is today the Mayor of Bandung. He succeeded to someone who had been the mayor for 10 years and whose policies had considerably affected the city according to Mrs. Larasati.

The effects of this community commitment are occurring progressively, because if we are waiting for the government's actions, changes are occurring in the long run, if they occur. However, issues such as floods or congestion jam are new issues that often occur and need to be solved quickly. In fact, organizations such as the Bandung Creative City Forum have to act on these issues, using a bottom up strategy owing to the fact that the majority of the population will not feel as part the community if they are not associated to the decision making process and the infrastructures management.

Regarding, the spreading of the model proposed by the Bandung Creative City Forum internationally, Mrs. Larasati first precise that in emerging countries, and especially in South Est Asia, a lot of initiatives are concretely launched without being named or conceptualized. She found out, attending conferences, that the model proposed by her organization was close to design thinking or social innovation.

Then Nicolas Buchoud asked Brian Kilkelly about his feeling regarding the ideas showed in the video broadcast in the introduction and also regarding Mrs. Larasati's message.

After precising he agreed with all the points presented in the video, Mr. Kilkelly pointed out that people who acted where in fact benefitting from infrastructures developed by the public authorities of the city, engineers and construction companies. He added that community commitment was surely necessary but that actions had to come from the top management of the public as well as the private sector who have to take the most important decisions to finance the infrastructures and especially sustainable ones that our city need**.**

Mr. Buchoud intervenes saying that the problem with observe in Europe is that **decisions taken by governments as well as the public sector do not always fit the population's needs**. We can also point out the same thing in the Bandung case. Then he asks Mr. Kilkelly if the decisions made by the top management of the private and the public sectors were made in order to fit the citizens' needs or if these decisions were corresponding to trends that needed to be supported. The CEO of the World Cities Network answers that, paradoxically, the role urban development planners has decreased. City's expansion is now more oriented by the market and by the demand than by specialized decision makers planning.

In addition to this Mr. Kilkelly insists on the fact that we are not in a time for choosing anymore but in a crisis one. So it is necessary to react and to strongly associate the public sector and individuals in order to lead necessary changes at the urban level.

The question for Mr. Buchoud is to know how it could be possible to address companies specialized in urban infrastructures and to ask them to take more into account the inhabitants needs in their programs?

Mr. Kilkelly claims that this can represent a challenge, but world that are set apart wan in fact be gathered, this forum can prove it. Companies do not know with which interlocutor of the civil society have to interact, especially amid lots of interest groups. Therefore, it would be tempting to address

no one directly and to take decisions about the actions that should be taken from researches and working sessions, while a lot of specialists in urban issues estimates that it is their job to know which orientation to follow and that it is the role of international companies to represent them to the governments. In this way, a citizen consultation could even be an admission to weakness. We have thus to remember that the citizen consultation process is often demanding for companies and add costs to the construction of public infrastructures.

However, these same companies are aware that the instability of the politic environment is very problematic and **commit citizens could be an efficient way to bypass or to overcome the institutional obstacle than can represent the political volatility.**

To the question about the feeling of the different stakeholders he had met -coming from the civil society as well as the companies and regarding the future of the sustainable urban policies, Mr. Kilkelly estimates that doubts are important, despite the insurance that companies and the private sector are showing. Six years ago, for instance, the concept of smart cities emerged and innovative projects have being launched but unfortunately today this concept is declining particularly because it is difficult to benefit from them quickly despite the numerous investments put in research and marketing. It is a sad piece of news for the town planners who would like to see such technological innovations to develop because this shows a disinterest from the companies.

Then Mr. Buchoud asks Mrs. Larasati how the Bandung Creative City Forum acted through a strategy based on active implication in order to be considered in the debates when they have to face companies on urban projects in Indonesia.

Mrs. Larasati took for example the Forest Walk, a project which aim is to build a forest path in town, independently of the government et thanks to some financing coming from the United Nations. This project faced an investor who wanted to build an eleven floor building with a parking in the same forest. At that time, the director of the Forum, the current mayor of Bandung, had then decided to adopt a new way to protest, more creative beyond the simple demonstration. A campaign had been launched in the form of a competition around the question "How do you want your forest to look like?" This question had generated the reflection of people all around the country including people who had never been in Bandung. The winners were a group of students whose project was built in 9 days, without consulting the authorities or having any authorization from them.

With the United Nations support, the Bandung Creative City Forum has also supported the launching of a self-service bicycle system, making bicycle available for the people who were attending the TUNZA International Conference- the United Nation division Program for the Environment dedicated to the youth- in order for them to do their journey between their hotel and the places the conference took place whereas local authorities were skeptical about the utility of setting such a transport system. This initiative enabled to give almost 200 bicycles to the town, enabling to set up a communal service to rent bicycle at city scale.

Then Mr. Buchoud wanted to know if the commitment of the people she was working with or she had met in Europe were in line with the society challenges. Mrs. Larasati pointed out the fact that challenges in South Est Asia where different. Inequalities in terms of education and finance are less important in Europe. Moreover, in Indonesia, attracting people's attention have to be done in a different way, and so a different approach, less official has to be adopted to gain people's trust. Trust in the new innovation. In addition to that, the biggest wealth of Bandung is not material but is based on human capital and on ideas.

Mr. Kilkelly joins Mrs. Larasati saying that it is the first time we have more technologies than ideas to use this technology and that the challenge resides in the trust we give to the different stakeholders that have access to all these data. Without this trust, a lot of innovations can be blocked. According

to him, it should be easier to trust an independent and disinterested organization such as local governments and communities in a city. Therefore, cities need to create new structures that are really collaborative and that are taking into account all the stakeholders and that could be the only one to be skilled enough to use our data in order to transform efficiently our cities.

Brian Kilkelly agrees with the idea that cities can have a kind of power and to give it to local communities in order to increase trust and to extend the private sector, the technologies and the communities. According to him, it is already the case in Barcelona for example with Barcelona 5.0 program, where an private organization collected and analyzed data coming from particular zones of the city in order to provide them to the inhabitants so they could manage their proper environment. This shows how much the municipal power could give back the citizen certain control on certain services. It is also a way for the governments to recognize they lack of resources or capacity to manage the entire city efficiently in an extremely changing world. If they can manage key data such as water supply or transportation, other numerous services could be achieved more efficiently by individuals, by the private sector or by a nongovernmental organization.

Nicolas Buchoud points out that the gap between European cities and emerging countries cities should not be that wide, owing the fact that Mrs. Larasati and Mr. Kilkelly are talking about the same issues. It should be necessary to leave aside this separation North-South and to look for a way to include ideas coming from the North in Southern cities and conversely in order to reduce this gap.

Question time

A first question is asked in the assistance. Mr. Yann Queinnec, lawyer specialized in corporate social responsibility issues asks the guests to give examples of good and bad news regarding the evolution or the urban situation including the technological aspect.

M. Kilkelly answers by giving the example of a smartphone application developed in Boston that is able to detect and to map the bumps and the holes on the road. Thanks to this application, authorities could find were the difficulties were and how to answer them at a low cost price. Actually technology can positively revolutionize city management but it can also have bad effects as it is the casa with the British health service that is willing to share data between different medical entities except if the user does not agree. Here the issue is that a lot a citizens do not trust confidential data management which slows down the initiative.

Mrs. Larasati refers to the dynamism of social networks in Indonesia, with the example of the current mayor of Bandung who twits on the projects he leads and answers the citizens' requests. According to her, the use of social networks is evidence that technologies can have a positive impact and can contribute to spread the information easier and to answer emergencies quickly. But the problem with these networks is they can accelerate rumors and destroy in few moments a project's social image. Mr. Buchoud takes the speech back and questions himself on a possible democracy on twitter.

A representative of the Earth Focus Foundation intervenes pointing out that in Europe, unlike the situation Mrs. Larasati described in Indonesia, there is a lack of collective consciousness, people do not gather to emerge projects, especially because politicians have been in power for so long that citizens do not have to motivation to stand and to tell they do not agree with a project, as it was the case when they had to advocate the Forest Walk in Bandung. Moreover, she assets that the youth had a relevant role to play in the success of such projects.

Mr. Kilkelly qualifies this statement, mentioning the example of the German city of Friburg, one the first cities aiming at the zero-carbon emission goal, but he agrees on the lack of trust populations

have regarding political processes. According to him, what is more worrying is that at a time when we need a political momentum to implement the change of society that we need to reduce our carbon emissions and our energy consumption in a world that is getting more and more populated, we are in a situation in which **we fully lack of trust regarding the political world.**

Mr. Buchoud underlines the paradoxical side of the situation, because some people are willing to implement policies to respond the emergencies regarding climate change whereas the trust people have in their politicians keeps decreasing.

A representative of voxe.org, an online platform that compares political programs during elections, would like to go back to the question of youth commitment, and takes her organization as an example within which several individuals have voluntarily participated and interested themselves in the political propositions for the future. Then she asked Mrs. Larasati if such initiatives are also led by young Indonesian in the context of the presidential and the legislatives elections that are to come.

Mrs. Larasati answers that social networks and new technologies are more than used during the campaign, and that volunteers are also implementing programs that are collecting data coming from the different political programs and candidates.

Before letting the two guests conclude, Mr. Buchoud would like to add that we are at dawn of a important demographical growth and we are not always aware of the risks that can threaten us, or of the solutions we will need to find for tomorrow. However, we have to build these solutions step by steps taking into account the fact that there are some gaps between governmental decisions, the private sector decisions and the citizens' expectations. These issues and gaps cannot be put aside when we talk about relating the Social Agenda with the metropolitan one.

The speakers conclude giving evolutionary perspective of their projects.

After having précising that the Bandung Creative City Forum was working on five years periods and that the current director was in office until 2017. Mrs. Larasati insisted on the concept of "urban acupuncture", aiming at realizing small changes in several zone of the cities which turns out to be the more appropriated method today for cities that are as much populated as Bandung. The Bandung Creative City Forum has the project to develop a roadmap by 2017 to make people aware and enable them to contribute to the urban changes independently of the municipal team. Workshops and conferences should be implemented to try to solve urban issues between the stakeholders implied in the city.

Mr. Kilkelly precises that the World Cities Network created a group of then cities including New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Barcelona, Helsinki or Paris, waiting for the participation of Chinese and Japanese cities, that will discuss about relations between different sectors –private and public- and the cities in order to make them more flexible about change**.** These new cities have to be more able to adapt themselves to the important changes that are to come and to the urban demographical growth, putting aside their traditional ways of acting. However, the World Cities Network lack the fact that it is difficult to make the citizen's voice heard by other committed stakeholders , who are not often committed in forums and roundtables.

To conclude, Nicolas Buchoud assets that a real organization should quickly be implemented in order to rethink the agendas and the solutions to make them more hopeful, and full of actions and to connect places, populations and technologies.