

The 7th Sao Paulo International Biennial of Architecture

CO-EVOLUTION

Opening speech by Henrik Valeur, 2007

I am sorry if I look a bit tired. I have been traveling 30 hours to get here from Shanghai – on the other side of the planet.

Nevertheless, I am very happy to be here. I always wanted to go to Brazil – at least ever since I met this Brazilian girl in Barcelona many years ago!

I am – obviously - also very pleased we get the opportunity to show our CO-EVOLUTION project in Brazil, which is a country with a policy that clearly favors sustainable development - both socially, economically and environmentally – and with a very strong international voice on these issues.

As President Lula recently said: *"The only more important issue in the world than trade, is climate change, and both are nearing a potential turning point. If nothing happens, we will go into history as a generation of politicians that failed humanity, especially the poor."*

As the United Nations have pointed out, climate changes will very likely be most damaging to poor countries, but it will certainly also affect the rich countries. It is therefore in the interest of all of us to work together to solve these problems, or – as the Chinese President, Hu Jintao, recently said: *"Faced with both opportunities and challenges, we must carefully think about and seriously answer the question of how to jointly build a sustainable future."*

This is what we have tried – in our own modest way - to do with the CO-EVOLUTION project.

We asked four of the most talented young Danish architecture offices to work together with professors and students from four of the best Chinese universities, to develop proposals for sustainable urban development in four of the biggest Chinese cities.

As you can see at the exhibition, the results are both visionary and pragmatic. Hopefully it also shows how architecture can play an important role in the pursuit of a more sustainable future. Not only because architects can wrap the somewhat boring environmental regulations and technologies in exciting design, and because they can address a great variety of environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects. But because they can do this together with colleagues, experts and others from various cultures and disciplines.

We believe, that this kind of intercultural – and interdisciplinary – collaboration is the only way forward, if we wish to improve our living environments.

With more than half of the world's population now living in cities, and continuous economic and urban growth, we definitely need new solutions for sustainable urban development.

This was already recognized at the Earth Summit here in Brazil in 1992, where the environment was – for the first time – put on the global agenda, and it will be further underlined at the upcoming Climate Summit in Denmark in 2009. But we also need concrete actions.

I would like to thank the Danish Architecture Centre for making it possible and the Danish Ministry of Culture for financing the exhibition here in Sao Paulo. But most of all, I would like to thank the participants who actually created the exhibition, my own team in Shanghai and the four teams of Danish architects and Chinese professors and students.

And – if anyone knows a Brazilian girl called Liv, who was in Barcelona 16 years ago, please let me know!

Thank you!