



THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH FOR ARCHITECTS

At the recent United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, the delegation remarked that the San Marino Declaration is the Hippocratic Oath for architects. The United Nations have strongly urged architects, city shapers, and engineers to put these sustainability principles into action.

Jackie De Burca, of Constructive Voices, explored this with HED's National Sustainability Leader, Daniel Jaconetti.

WHAT IS THE SAN MARINO DECLARATION?

"The San Marino Declaration is a declaration by the United Nations. It's a set of principles for a sustainable and inclusive future of urban design and architecture. Practitioners who agree to this are agreeing to do several things, all germane to the design of buildings in cities.

The declaration functions at two scales: the micro-scale and the urban planning scale: designing these projects, buildings, and cities in a way that limits the use of energy. They're going a little further to, or agreeing to, only using sustainable energy sources such as wind, hydro, tidal, solar, reuse of rainwater: these limit the use of other natural resources and incorporate salvaged or recycled materials where possible.

I really like that the second segment of this declaration is less traditional and consistent with trends in the United States, outlining a need to respect the identity and cultural heritage of places and buildings."



DO YOU AGREE WITH THE COMPARISON THAT THE DECLARATION IS A HIPPOCRATIC OATH FOR ARCHITECTS?

"I think it's a really good metaphor. Here's an example to break this down differently. Let's pick a particular specialty of medicine: plastic surgery. If a potential patient went into a consultation and asked the surgeon for a procedure and the surgeon knew it wouldn't turn out as expected, that plastic surgeon has an oath to not just say "yes" and take their money and turn them into Frankenstein. They're supposed to educate the patient and help them understand this is not going to yield a positive outcome.

So, we architects and engineers and other building design professionals, have a similar responsibility to educate our clients to the implications of what they're trying to do.

Another example, without getting too political, happened years ago in the United States. There were a few firms that silently agreed they were not going to compete in the Request for Proposal's to help build the border wall that former President Trump was trying to create. The firm's did not believe it was the right thing to do. That's standing by your principles and not just saying, "oh, I want the money."



I think that we have that good-natured responsibility and AIA (the American Institute of Architects), has codified this in our code of conduct. We have a professional responsibility to engage in and educate our clients on matters of climate change and environmental responsibility in everything we do."



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