

## **Blog about EE Global – Can we Change the Inevitable?**

Recently returned to Europe after more than a week in the US I am full of new experiences and thoughts. My main mission was EE Global in Washington on May 21 and 22. Things are indeed changing.

My first observation of change is a negative; it's about the climate. It is changing and it goes fast. I happened to see much about weather and this was indeed scary: Hurricanes have been stronger than ever and more frequent. Tornados, it was high season, and this year they a bigger and more powerful than before. I learned that they could be both dry and wet. Especially the wets are devastating. Hailstones come on the size of chicken eggs! It was constantly in the news and told stories about fear and destruction.

The interesting thing about this was the underlying message; Weather is changing – and it is our own fault. It is the emission of greenhouse gasses, which is to blame. This is the first time I saw these kinds of messages becoming a part of general news and hopefully the understanding of ordinary Americans across the US. The first step of change is; to recognise the problem!

Further it was the week of news about the collapsing of ice in the Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctica. Much talk about sliding in the sea and the fast impacts in terms of rise in sea levels. Again surprised how strong this hit the news and TV programs. It was a part of the EE Global, with people criticizing that things are not happening fast enough on the political scene.

Programs in TV focused on the fact that many national monuments in US are close to sea level and that they could disappear or change. The dramatic picture was the Statute of Liberty (a key symbol of the American spirit) standing in the water and not on a small island. The hosts of the weather channel even took it so far to encourage people to use Memorial Day, one of the few long weekends in US, to see some of these American monuments before it is too late. Giving the word Memorial a different focus – "Are we loosing our cultural heritage?"

It can be added that many people live close to the sea and that monuments like the New York could be standing directly in the water, like a new Venetia when the old one is gone as a first impact of sea level rise.

Great to see that the US is finally starting to wake up here five minutes to twelve, hopefully it is not too late and already five minutes past twelve! So I would like too be adding the encouragement that people should spend this weekend on action against climate change. Let's reduce the energy use that implies this change of climate.

All this could give me a negative mood, but this is not me; I'm always full of Positive Energy. So I would like to focus on the good changes I saw on this trip.

I had the best EE Global ever and this was not just because Denmark won a price for the development of policies of which I have been part of in the last 3 decades. I had the busiest EE Global ever; monitoring a high level Thought Leader Panel on best practices in different climates, participating in another on going beyond building codes and certification; and

helping GBPN to set up an intense learning session on comparison of ambitious policies and being on the panel in this event.

That there could be as much room for a very ambitious “Going Deep and Positive Energy Buildings guy like me” is a good sign. For me EE Global is changing and moving in the right direction.

It was also great for me to see that Net Zero Energy Buildings (a special case of Positive Energy – where all is in balance) was coming on the agenda. It was a part of the discussion in each of the sessions I participated in and not just as a strange and impossible curiosum, but as the target for change already happening; and just around the corner in significant scale. Showing that total energy use is the potential for saving, not only a fraction.

This is such a great difference from the time I worked I IEA and wrote about [Building Codes and Policies for New Buildings](#) in 2007, where people saw this as a wild dream, which were still not realistic. Or in [the IEA recommendations for energy efficiency](#) from Heiligendamm in 2008, where G8 endorsed recommendations striving for Passive and Zero Energy buildings and on setting Zero as target for Building Codes on longer term. This was also supported by large emerging economies such as China, India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa.

I still assume it went through the summit because some of the leaders didn't fully understand the consequences of these recommendations. But for me personally this became a start of a journey, which lead to promotion of a deep path going for zero or plus energy in new buildings and deep renovation in existing buildings. It has been the background for Zero Energy Summit in Washington DC arranged by Res Net and other good US network together with DoE, for my interventions in Mexico and for many presentations around the world. I have been stressing that if the leaders of the worlds largest nations could adopt this, then we on lower level have to get our acts together and get this moving.

The discussions on zero energy or plus energy on EE Global was to a large extend focusing on residential buildings, but for me this is a good sign, because nothing is more important than the place where we live. If we can get started in new residential buildings, even just the smaller ones, then I guess the aspiration for both commercial buildings and renovation will soon come.

[The session \(C1\)](#) I was moderating had high level decision in policy development from 5 places that have already taken important steps for Net Zero and Positive Energy; Masdar City, Mexico (CONUEE), Singapore (BCA), Germany (DENA) and Canada (NAIMA). All showing that this is a relevant discussion in all climates from; Hot and Dry, Hot Humid over Moderate Climates to Cold or even Arctic climate. I was happy to see the open discussion and the high focus on getting policies implemented and getting it right in the first place. Indeed one of the best and most [interesting panels](#) I have moderated.

I was also pleased to see the focus on setting deep targets and on possibilities for NZEB or plus energy in other sessions. Especially it was an interesting fact that the costs are maybe not so extreme. I one session people from North East US and especially Washington claimed that some builders say that they can build Net Zero Energy within the normal margin for prices on new home. If it doesn't cost more and it saves a lot of energy – this seems a no-brainer to me !

Finally there was a very good reception of the GBPN tools on [going deep policies for both new and existing buildings](#), which I had the pleasure to develop as Technical Director together with the young team of GBPN, lead by Niamh, Sophie and Anne Claire; and involving many of

the best experts in each of these fields all over the world. All of this work being very ambitious and pointing toward a world where buildings use no (fossil-based) energy, but rely on the use of solar, wind and other renewable and sustainable sources embedded in the building surroundings.

All of these events gave me hopes and compensated the bad news about our climate and the changes, which seems inevitable– but as Yann Arthus Bertrand says in the film “HOME” - **“It is too late to be pessimistic”**.

**We have to act and do all we can to stop or at least reduce this change !**

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*IEA Paper on Building Codes:*

[www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/name,3780,en.html](http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/name,3780,en.html)

*25 IEA Recommendations on Energy Efficiency:*

[www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/name,3782,en.html](http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/name,3782,en.html)

*EE Global panel C1:*

<http://eeglobalforum.org/agenda/executive-dialogue-sessions?session=1C>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/tosaveenergy/14232790204/in/set-72157644480591489>

*GBPN Comparison Tools:*

[www.gbpn.org/databases-tools/purpose-policy-tool-new-buildings](http://www.gbpn.org/databases-tools/purpose-policy-tool-new-buildings)

[www.gbpn.org/databases-tools/purpose-renovation-policy-tool](http://www.gbpn.org/databases-tools/purpose-renovation-policy-tool)