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“TO Be or NOT?”

Samuel H. Gross Jr. AIA, NCARB

"If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe then man would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man."

Albert Einstein

Such a circumstance may be facing our architectural design profession if we do not prevent the frequent and flagrant abuse of our global eco-system. Disturbing the natural balance of life could become catastrophic from the simplest imbalance of man with nature. What if we considered our profession as the shelter pollinators of our communities? Can we find threatening parallels for global survival similar to the lowly honey bee community?

The honey bee circumstance, Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), may relate to our own sustainable design disorder (SDD) recommending a neutral carbon footprint for all future development. Will our inability to convince our global communities or individual clients to accept this design goal generate our disappearance or no more man? Will our failure to communicate be as devastating as the bees which will not pollinate? Are our design thoughts and processes of enclosure as delicate a balance with nature as the lowly bee?

Consider a few of the elements of the bee CCD. Adult worker bees simply fly away and never come back. This leaves the untrained worker bees to discover their own way. What would happen if our senior workers or designers would fly away without notice or transition? Can our profession endure such a downsizing without preparation? In my opinion, our profession has already endure one downsizing too many. Technology can not replace the lost brain power, experience and needed refined patience to lead our profession. Retention and recycling of our experienced professionals must be addressed.

Next, the bee's natural defenses simply give way. Their immune system is being depleted by stress, new pesticides, increasing foes, and multiple deaths during relocation transportation to faraway communities. Our design profession is adapting to these similar stresses as we expand our practices regionally or globally. Will our natural defenses also give way with our transition? The forces of combatants have increased greatly with this design service expansion. Can we temper the flagrant abuse of our global eco-system or will we become as vulnerable as the honey bee with extinction? To be or not is the resounding question for a sustainable survival with nature facing climate change.

"...a designed building...should respond to a great variety of factors and that its ultimate form should express those conditions and demands rather than provide a memorial to its architect or those who paid the bill."

Peter Blake