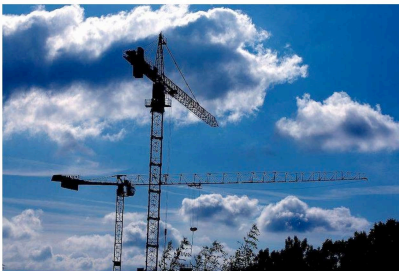


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Can a mayor still also be a builder?

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This is the story of a mayor from the Greater Paris Region who received the Mayor Builder's Award two years ago. "The day I went to pick up the prize, I would have been better off breaking my leg," the mayor in question told **Cédric de Lestrang**, managing director of **Axe Immobilier**, who reported the anecdote. The very next day, in fact, a campaign on social networks accused this builder mayor of being "a sell-out" who "disfigured the city", with the social networks campaign undertaken in an "aggressive" manner says **Cédric de Lestrang**, and the campaign almost cost him his re-election last year. The moral of the story: "This mayor says today that even the mayors who are builders and who are convinced of their actions no longer claim to be."

The anecdote might make one smile if it were not indicative of a fundamental trend in construction. "In 2020 - and this continues into 2021 - a lot of elected officials, public stakeholders, investors and developers have been asking questions about what to build and, above all, about the acceptability of these constructions," said **Marc Lhermitte**, a partner at EY, during a round table at the **Mirum** Leaders- Perspectives Summit, of which **Business Immo** is a partner. This construction standstill was the subject of the round table discussion entitled "Can a mayor still also be a builder?"

Marion Waller, who advises the mayor of Paris on issues of architecture, heritage and landscape transformation, formulated a contrasting response that reflects the paradigm shift that is taking place: from a mayor who is exclusively a builder to a mayor who is more of a developer. "Construction is one of the solutions, but it is not the only one," defended **Anne Hidalgo's** advisor, who is also an environmental philosopher. "For example, at the **Paris City Hall** we are promoting a global policy of transforming offices into residential use. If it is considered that there is still a need to build, this concerns only certain places when it is relevant in view of Paris' 15-minute city project, promoted by the mayor. We must keep in mind the whole range of solutions, including construction."

“Structural decrease”

Sitting not far from Marion Waller, Marc Lhermitte nevertheless regretted "the downward outlook for housing construction", which he considers "worrying" in view of "the urgency [...] of badly housed families".

This observation is shared by the managing director of Axe Immobilier. He too spoke of "a need" for housing that is increasing. "If we look at supply, we have gone from 37,000 to 12,000 building permits between 2017 and 2020", observed the developer, who concludes that there is "a structural decrease". However, Cedric de Lestrangé refuses to accept the idea of building "on a massive scale". If massive means building to the detriment of the quality of life, to the detriment of the ecology by artificialising the soil, to the detriment of the heritage, then no!" A statement that is very much in line with the concerns of the city of Paris. "Then there is another element: we must find a way to make better use of existing buildings, to intensify their use," added the director of Axe Immobilier.

“A good dialogue”

From the developers' perspective as well as from that of the city hall, the time is ripe for change. And climate change in particular. We really need to change the way we build and renovate," insisted Marion Waller. "Today, we are questioning the habits that have been adopted by the construction industry for several decades, such as concrete for example. And the experience of our projects in Paris proves that this transition can be initiated as long as the city halls are demanding and establish a good dialogue with the developers." This "good dialogue" took place around the table at the Leaders' Perspectives Summit, where Cedric de Lestrangé assured that "the industry has already started to integrate many of these reflexes that need to change".

Marc Lhermitte, for his part, was more nuanced, using a comparison between real estate and the automobile"

"A bit like with diesel, it is a question of adaptation time and the ability of citizens to afford a method of construction that is still much more expensive and difficult to implement today." The challenge, according to him, is to ensure that these changes take place in five years rather than in ten or 15 years.

Watch the replay of the round table "Can a mayor still also be a builder?" on the platform leaders' Perspective Summit by Mipim



Richard Flurin

Journalist - Business
Immo (Business Immo
Group)

Author of **37**
articles