

Sustainable Cities? Is it Possible?

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Here is an interesting video on green local perspectives and projects that if made extensive in a city they could transform it to a sustainable path. But, is it enough?

Alex Steffen starts his speech saying that when we have overwhelming problems we tend to seek simple answers. This is the case for climate change. We look to the source of emissions and then we design specific mitigation measures. If emissions come from fossil fuels, we need to change the energy matrix increasing the use of renewable energy sources. *Problem solved.* There is only one issue with this, we are not fixing the problem, we are changing one aspect of it. This is related on our way of seeing the world, separated in sectors that deliniate the problem and how we fix it. Climate change is a challenge for this. Or an opportunity.

Considering that the majority of the world lives in urban areas, Steffen suggests to see the opportunities for sustainability in cities. We can reflect on large urban areas as a sort of microcosmos, each city as a unique system (of course imbedded in other systems). If we do that we could have an holistic approach to a geographical area with its internal dynamics and demands, as for energy, food, transportation and culture.

Interestingly, Steffen suggests having denser cities, with special high density spots because that would translate into thresholds for the citizens which will stop using so much cars, reducing transportation emissions. Furthermore, he states that we need a deeper look on what constitutes a sustainable city, looking at its subsystems: rainwater captation, ecosystem restauration, polinator pathways, soil and carbon sequestration, among others. This is a step forward from the “classical” green-city approach of increasing the green areas (green roofs, green walls, parks). Still, we shall take one more step: changing our view of a sustainable life, because each one of us constitutes our cities.



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