URBAN ENVIRONMENT
GREENER CITIES

Concept Note

Rivers choked with plastic, traffic exhaust fumes, not to mention noise… Cities are the source of 70% of energy use and 80% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. And this has serious health effects. In fact, it causes around 7 million premature deaths globally each year and have a major economic impact.

Yet, at the same time, cities are centers of economic growth, innovation, employment, education and prosperity that are fully aware of the importance of sustainable development. How to solve this paradox?

Some are looking to technology -from smart grids, urban wind power, or geothermal energy to smart lights- to become greener while international organizations, like the UN, are promoting partnerships to mainstream environmental considerations into urban policy making and promote dialogue and cooperation. Network organization, The Green City, also favors the exchange of knowledge and information on the benefits of greenery in the city.

It's not just about green roofs and green spaces, efficient buildings with intelligent energy management systems and green districts, which all undoubtedly have positive effects on citizen's wellbeing and health and bring new business opportunities. It's also about economic savings, social diversity, equity and, in general, a better life for all.

Yet there are some challenges to overcome. How can the use of smart solutions involving real-time remote sensing, the analysis of newly-available big data and the Internet of Things (IoT) open up cost-effective solutions to move goods and people, tackle air pollution, manage energy demand, abate carbon emissions, collect and recycle waste, and to provide clean and accessible water? How can all the "coulds" and "shoulds" highlighted on paper turn into real initiatives when much of them depend on the political will to implement and involve a strong cost up front?

Unfortunately, local authorities sometimes prioritize other land uses without considering the imperative relevance of greener and cleaner cities. But they can't look the other way anymore. In face of climate emergency, urban leaders need to take decisive actions now.

Expected outcomes

- Get insights on climate change impacts, and strategies for mitigation and resilience in cities.

- Get insights on how cities can contribute to a sustainable development from a global and local perspective.
- Get improved knowledge on the benefits of greenery and how to finance green initiatives.
- Learn about good practices and examples of decisive actions to face climate emergency.

Guiding questions

- Why do we need to imperatively think green? (the reasons for climate emergency)
- How can the use of smart technologies create cleaner, greener and more sustainable city environments?
- How can cities finance green initiatives?
- What is the ROI of environmental sustainability?

Keywords

Keywords: urban sustainability, greenery, green cities, green districts, smart energy, smart buildings