

Unit 13 Sustainable urban regeneration

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The first step we should assume to start talking seriously about sustainability is that sustainability is not negotiable, is not a marketing strategy to keep on doing the same. Is just a necessity now and an emergency tomorrow. That is why we also should stop talking about sustainability and start working. Further more than put solar panel collectors, or evaluate things with narrow-concrete point of view. Sustainability is the equilibrium strategy and that includes everything. So we just can not think on working by "our-specialized-selves" anymore. Architects, engineers, politics, economists, anthropologists even artists and so on, have to deal with others and absolutely at this international meeting and specially at student session (where we still have the chance to change the way of doing) this should happen.

When we point urban sustainability we introduce the main urban component: the people. The society is who has the chance because specialistics and technical stuff is there to propose but is not able to make it by themselves. So we must learn how to deal with people, from the house project till the city planning.

I come from Barcelona, so when we talk about urban regeneration I know quite well what does it mean. But I am not so sure if we know in this magazine-city what a sustainable urban regeneration is (even if we receive awards because of this). We have regenerated the whole city and we have become a planning example, but we just skip the social component and just look for economical short distance benefits. Is this sustainable? I don't think it is at all.

Barcelona chose economical and photogenic criteria to do its urban regeneration but never thought about people that was already living there. Obviously they were supposed to move and to restart at another place, even if they were too old to do that. I don't think this is different from other cities that are also growing and improving fast their conditions... but I am worry because Barcelona becomes a pattern for urban planners. And that unsustainable photogenic-society is infecting others. Barcelona improves without its citizens. Not just divides social classes through the city but also sweeps poor people away. That breaks the complex social ecosystem forcing rich and poor to be independent when they are naturally dependent. Obviously that has nothing to do with a real sustainable urban regeneration.

So in order to work for a sustainable urban regeneration we have to understand previously our cities (trying to avoid apply other's "successful" strategies). To deal with the city plan we can not work alone but in interdisciplinary team. And we must impose an ethical-sustainable code to the economy dictatorship.

The city plan can not work without the direct complicity of people, so they have to get part and also be prepared to that. We can afford this by sustainability educational programs that make them conscious of the complex urban situation.

And obviously we can not think this is impossible or utopistic, because sustainability is not negotiable, is not a marketing strategy to keep on doing the same. Is just a necessity now and an emergency tomorrow.