

GOVERNANCE and Ten-Year Plans for Sustainable Development

For at least three reasons, the notion of “governing” locally, as it has always been known, has become unthinkable as we take sustainable development issues into consideration.

Citizenship

First and foremost, the lifestyle changes to consider are such that elected officials and administrators will find themselves obliged to consider the citizen as one of the key players of evolution. In order for these new policies to be successful, citizens’ information is necessary: this information is about damages caused to the environment and public health that were brought on by previous practices – a reliable source of information that is as distant as possible from that of the one published by concerned lobbies. The information must also be about various alternative scenarios and include the medium term economic costs of initial investment and operation, the life expectancy of the materials used and the respective eco-balances.

This new eco-citizenship leads to the invention of new appropriation methods for this information, as it is very much perceived as technical, economical, ecological, and political. The terms of public consultation regarding these daily needs and consultation to help compare the advantages and the disadvantages of various practices, old ones and new ones, appear essential.

The basis of these new policies is education because the changes in lifestyle suggest a good knowledge of the environment, an understanding of how eco-systems work, and above all, an education on the pillar impact to mankind, to public health and environment, and therefore an education in biology.

Planning

Secondly, the different environmental evolutions announced by scientists will require adapted predictions and make territorial planning impossible to ignore. The establishment of three or four parameters proves to be necessary in this matter:

- Accomplishment of contradictory and shared local diagnostics in order to have a common and complex reference point of community thinking.
- Availability of prospective studies that are, if possible, independent at the climate and health levels, for example.
- Stating of the shared values, true drivers of future choices for local communities, such as social issues and their implications. For example, the replacement of fossil fuel automobiles with biofuel or electric vehicles changes nothing to traffic jams or to the supremacy of the automobile in regards to the well-being of those who live near highways.
- Research of collective goals based on these diagnostics, studies and values. For example, search for a more friendly society that is moderate in its consumptions, less fierce on slow or non-renewable resources, less attentive to technological achievements, conscious of restoring the social bonds in the family and its proximities, the search for a society that is re-learning to use the tools that guarantee the working of independent humans, as individuals and as a community.

Another Local Organization: Governance

Lastly, the new territorial governance involves a reconstruction of relations between local players.

Elected officials are the driving force behind the social reorganization that is imposed by the ecological crisis.

The training that is addressed to them will have to include the knowledge of the ingredients of sustainable development. Couldn't we consider short and accelerated training sessions for all the local election candidates? Thus, bringing pre-election confrontations more founded on the methods of building urban and territorial projects than on pledge programs that only involve those who listen and believe in them.

Changing political life certainly supposes that we learn to pose the problems together rather than giving the answers alone; alone between elected officials, alone between scientists, or alone between elected officials and scientists, but without the citizens.

It is not because some are elected by universal vote, that others have the means for scientific research, that other administrators have the function of implementing the decisions taken, or that other entrepreneurs in charge of the prerogative of "creating wealth", that one or the other can ignore that our development model has lived so much its repercussions to health, ecological and social plans are a disaster.

That is why we need to create a new development model. So, we will only be able to invent it by changing the way we think. The facts to which we will now be confronted to are complex. They are composed of several parameters.

Those interested in these parameters are numerous and the expression of these diverse situations and interests should allow for getting closer to shared knowledge of these issues by the participation of all, including the bringing forward of multiple autonomist and micro-local parcelled personal solutions; including the common decision, from elected officials and citizens, to make the decisions and implement them together, far from the only defence of corporate interests.

A way of re-learning the implications towards a more global appropriation, because citizens must also learn to stop being fence sitter consumers and become players that are implicated and responsible for a new governance that is socially and ecologically in tune to be able to emerge while there is still time.

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