

Work Style

A worldwide observatory on work style changes

#03

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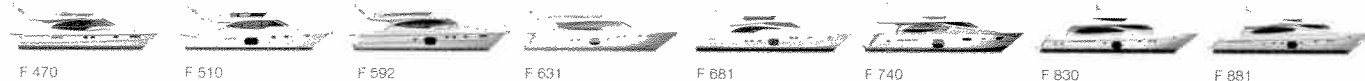
If You Already Have Everything
You Love, It's Time To Fall In
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Work cities The greening of the cities



By FILIPPO DE BORTOLI

LOOKING GREEN, THINKING GREEN, SHAPING GREEN CITIES, AND LIVING GREEN SEEM TO BE THE CONTEMPORARY 'MUST DO' THINGS. Green thinking really can bring positive change in cities worldwide. Local administrations are leading the way. They know that improving quality of life brings benefits.

Getting the 'green light'

The challenge of greening the economy has been taken very seriously by local governments, since this is one of most effective drivers for improving quality of life in large and medium-sized urban areas. Looking to some of the most interesting experiments, there's a 'green texture' linking such diverse cities such as Melbourne, Stockholm, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Berlin, Tianjin, Singapore, as well as San José.

GREEN BUILDING CONFERENCE (SYDNEY, FEBRUARY 2010)

This year's Conference took the title *People, Places and Performance* and, as always, explored new ideas in sustainable building, products and technologies all designed to make cities greener - and, consequently - more attractive. Among the speakers was Malcolm Smith, an architect and founding Director of Integrated Urbanism at Arup UK. A few days later, and about 1,000 miles away, he was the guest speaker at the *Leading Green Thinkers' Breakfast* in Brisbane.

It is perhaps no coincidence, that someone like Malcolm Smith - who has led the masterplanning of sustainable cities around the world, from Stratford (London, UK) to El Hassan (Jordan) and Pune (India) - was invited to speak in a country like Australia. It is also perhaps no coincidence, that the Green Building Conference should be held in Sydney, or that the *Leading Green Thinkers' Breakfast* should take place in Brisbane. For Australia was possibly the first nation to play the 'green factor' as a key point in the November 2007 federal

elections. Focusing on renewables, as well as the Kyoto Protocol, and the need to strengthen the links between environmental safeguards and economic development, Kevin Rudd swept to victory. Having said this, we need to take account of the fact that, although a number of Australian cities score high in the international 'quality of life' rankings, European cities are also among the front-runners.

THE EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL AWARD

The European Commission has long recognised the fundamental role played by local authorities in improving the environment. *The European Green Capital Award* was conceived to promote and reward these efforts, to showcase and encourage exchange of best practice among European cities. Competing for the award were cities that are signatories of the "Covenant of Mayors", by means of which they have committed to go beyond the objectives of EU energy policy in terms of reducing CO² emissions through

01 Ferns into the greenhouse, Planten un Blomen Park in Hamburg.
© Michael Pasdzior
02 Gåshaga, housing aimed at combining the comforts of contemporary urban living with a traditional archipelago setting in Lidingö near Stockholm.
© sandellsandberg



03 Bronze in the garden, Planten un Blomen Park in Hamburg.
© Michael Pasdzior



enhanced energy efficiency as well as cleaner energy production and use. Stockholm, the capital of Sweden is the first European Green Capital, with Hamburg taking over the title in 2011. Indeed, Northern Europe is showing what can be achieved by local administrations, alongside daily practice by residents who have willingly changed their personal lifestyles and personal behaviours in regards to food, water, mobility, energy consumption, and use of green areas.

GREEN LIFE EXPOSITION IN MILAN (FEB 5-MARCH 28 2010)

With its theme being Building Sustainable Cities this exhibition showcases more than 60 examples of urban planning: single buildings and blocks that are changing and reshaping many European cities.

As explained by Maria Berrini, one of the exhibition curators, the exhibition shows what was done in specific areas of a particular town or city, these areas sometimes being redundant industrial estates. Elsewhere, disused railway stations or abandoned farmland, have been pressed into service for offices, or residential and commercial use.

In all cases, energy consumption has been reduced thanks to architectural innovation and building with "green" and special materials. Among other innovations: public transportation helps reduce pollution and green public areas are made available.

Early-day outcomes are encouraging: in Amsterdam, 38% of journeys are conducted by bike (thanks to 400 kilometres of cycle-paths). In Freiburg, 70% of waste is recycled. Berlin has created an industrial district that produces 40% of all the solar cells used in Germany.

On the other hand, even if the Copenhagen conference in December 2009 did not produce significant effects for world greening, an initial positive effort has come from China, where something started to move in the right direction.



TIANJIN (CHINA) AND SINGAPORE

The most important experiment is probably at Tianjin, 150 kilometres from Beijing, where the so-called 'Go Green Initiative' is a 15-year Eco City project. The idea is to give some 350,000 residents a new green urban environment, setting ambitious



04 Morning exercise in the heartlands, Singapore.
© Lim Lian Hai

05 Modern buildings in Tianjin Economic Technological Development Area Tianjin China

06 Museum Tianjin
07 Labrador Park, Singapore.
© Singapore Tourism Board

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(but maybe too ambitious) goals regarding air quality, carbon emissions, green building and public transportation.

It is surely not by chance that this project derived from a joint effort between China and Singapore. For the City-State is one of the best examples in the Asian region, where a 'Garden City' becomes a 'City in the Garden'. What looks to be mere wordplay is, in fact, the challenge that Singapore is aiming to win in the next couple of years. Nature and technological innovation will come together in an urban environment, where eco-sustainability moves from a project to a reality. The new plans - called 'Gardens by the Bay' - impact one square kilometre in the heart of the city, on the waterfront, costing 500 million euro.

SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA

One of the most innovative projects in the USA is the 'carrot and stick' approach adopted by the City Council of San José, in California.

Keyed on three main targets - clean technology, sustainability and green mobility - the capital of Silicon Valley has, since October 2007, adopted a 'Green Vision'. The objective is to transform San José into a world centre of Clean Technology innovation. A fifteen-year plan, consisting of clear rules and incentives has been set in place. Preliminary results can be seen at www.sanjoseca.gov/greenvision/VisibleStrategies.asp. There is also an active platform designed to introduce real change in people's personal behaviours.

This kind of approach demonstrates that economic growth, environmental stewardship and fiscal responsibility can drive the city into a new era, creating some 25,000 new 'clean tech' jobs. Much more importantly, though, it calls for an unprecedented alliance between local authorities, citizens, business companies, schools and universities. Working together, they are jointly responsible for a thoroughgoing change in political and civil culture.



The challenge is for new generations of architects, designers and for a new breed of professional trained in skills that were simply inconceivable just ten years ago. And these kinds of people have much greater 'green' expectations than their parents did. They are looking for 'smaller' situations, where global connectivity intersects local quality of life, creating a (new) social identity. In this way, they will be giving their own personal contribution to build the 'personality' of the city of tomorrow. ●

08 Mosebacke torg at Södermalm in Stockholm. ©Nicho Södling

09 Singapore Botanic Gardens.
© Singapore Tourism Board

10 Brandenburg Gate fountain in Berlin. © Lehnartz Gbr Lehnartz, Klaus und Dirk

11 Stockholm: a nice walk along Djurgårdskanalen in the end of summer. © Nicho Södling