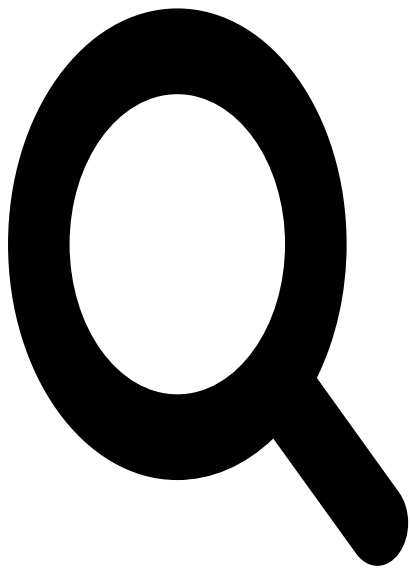


# **EMERALD CITIES. URBAN SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Posted on 26/10/2011 by Naider*



A few days ago, we reviewed a book on how to achieve these [times of economic austerity](#) are not an excuse to stop acting in favor of sustainability. This new book, [Emerald cities. Urban Sustainability and Economic Development](#), written by [Joan Fitzgerald](#), can give clues to be even more ambitious and hope that urban sustainability is precisely an engine of economic development. In both cases, the books pay special attention to the energy issue as a central element in the functioning of urban systems.

This book in particular is a journey that begins and ends in Europe, a metaphor used by the author to present one of her main theses: in the last two decades, the United States has lost an initial position of dominance in the technological development of renewable energies against the impulse of countries like Germany or Sweden. The cities of **Freiburg** or **Stockholm** are reference cases in our closest environment in terms of energy sustainability policies and, nevertheless, they seem to be light years away from the reality of North American cities, the area to which the book is mainly addressed. The German city, on the border between Switzerland, Germany and France, is a perfect example to explain the mobilization capacity of the local economy that has a commitment to sustainability with a long tradition (since 1975, with the first mobilizations before the announcement of the installation of a nuclear power plant) and which has resulted not only in the intense use of renewable energies in the city, but also in a powerful local ecosystem of companies with high added value in the energy market, mainly solar and power centers. research that are right now pointers. In the same way, Stockholm is another good example of how from urban planning policies, with the example of [Hammarby Sjöstad](#) in the lead, cities can be designed based on new criteria of energy efficiency and intelligent use of energy.

When I began to read some time ago about the birth of new energy sources, the United States used to appear as one of the territories where there was the greatest technological impulse, where the first large-scale implantation experiments were being carried out. solar energy or the most advanced studies on hydrogen. The book reviews the **slowdown in R&D investment** in this area at the end of the 20th century and how this has not only been a drag on the US national economy, but that has left many cities orphaned in the fight for sustainability. However, Fitzgerald's book becomes a vindication of cities that, despite the fact that these have not been good times for national policies to combat climate change and renewable energy in the United States, have built their own path and are have stood out as examples to consider. Thus, the public and private actions in some cities in different fields such as **renewable energy** (Austin, Toledo, Cleveland,...), **energy efficiency**, **are explained with an important level of detail. in building** (Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, New York, ), or **transportation** (Denver, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle).

In all cases, the analysis focuses on describing the connection between these actions and the capacity they have to generate opportunities for economic development through technological promotion and the creation of economic activity in the local fabric, situating the issue of green jobs. or the green economy in the field of the concrete and what local authorities can do, even against the current of the priorities of national governments. In many cases, these are processes that are not typical of the European institutional model, but are still valuable precisely because other ways of dealing with local policies seem to be imposed through [public-private shapes](#) in which they attract attention, on everything, alliances of coalitions of social groups and environmentalists with

economic sectors to implement incentive mechanisms for other energy management and production models in the absence of a decision on the part of the public authorities.

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