SMART CITY EXPO WROLD CONGRESS: WHAT WAS EXHIBITED ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN 2012 (I)

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At the end of last year I had the opportunity to attend the Smart City Expo World Congress, organized by Fira de Barcelona, to create a series of articles on environmental and energy issues that will synthesize the most relevant aspects of each session.

The thematic sessions on the environment at the Smart City Expo World Congress 2012 revealed that the city can stop being a mere consumer center of natural resources to provide a series of environmental services that contribute to improving the environment both urban as natural. Considering the complete life cycle of products or applying new technologies to learn more about the processes that operate in the city are some examples of actions that should be promoted to establish the smart city. Challenges such as climate change or efficient water management can see in this city of the future a good tool with which to configure solutions that make urban metabolism sustainable

It is worth reviewing the ideas and thoughts that the different speakers presented in 2012 to keep us up to date with a view to holding next edition of 2013 (from November 19 to 21).

A healthy city that generates environmental services

From an environmental point of view, cities are considered authentic sinks of natural resources that return waste and pollution to the environment. This concerns not only the high energy consumption and the consequent GHG emissions, but also the comprehensive management of water or urban and industrial waste.

For the city of the future, it is not just a question of reducing, recycling or purifying, but of creating new energy self-production systems, and broadening the focus to consider the complete life cycle of products and the role that smart cities play in it. , as discussed in the different sessions dedicated to the environment at the Smart City World Expo 2012 world congress.

The smart city is, above all, healthy for its inhabitants

A smart city should first of all be a healthy city for its citizens. As centers of economic, cultural or leisure activity, cities must preserve the quality of their environment from the point of view of public health, that is, they must put people at the center of the debate and attend to their needs . This argument was put forward by Professor Michael Braungart (1) from the University of Rotterdam, linking with the “cradle to cradle” concept, of which he is the promoter, which considers the complete life cycle of the products. It is about going beyond recycling, considering not just the product but the service it provides, and managing to reintroduce waste into the environment effectively, so that the product, at the end of its useful life, generates a specific asset. to the environment. Under these premises, it is possible to devise products that imitate the biological cycles of nature and, expanding the scale, design buildings that function as trees and cities that replicate the dynamics of a forest. In this way, cities would stop being net consumers of natural resources to become producers of environmental services.

Public-private collaboration is essential to finance the transformation of the city

This complex transformation of the city requires adequate financing, a recurring theme that was

presented by different speakers. The adaptation of existing infrastructures or even the creation of new ones are required, which entails a very important investment with more long-term than short-term returns. Bruno Berthon (2), from Accenture, pointed out the apparent return on investment as one of the main issues on this subject, for which he exposed the need to minimize risks and adjust and correctly size the budget for infrastructures to the real needs of the city. For his part, Dimitri Zenghelis (3), from the London School of Economics, pointed to the private sector as the main source of financing, for which the public administration should favor appropriate collaboration formulas, seeking a new governance model for the modernization of the city.

(1) Michael Braungart , Professor at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, University Lüneburg and Twente - EPEA Environmental Protection and Encouragement Agency GmbH (EPEA).

(2) Bruno Berthon, Global Managing Director - Sustainability Services - Accenture.

(3) Dimitri Zenghelis, Senior Economic Advisor, Senior Fellow - London School of Economics.

There are no comments yet.