

SUSTAINABILITY IN TIMES OF AUSTERITY

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Things are as they are, it is not necessary to insist much. The news constantly reminds us that there is no other case than to continue in this state of pessimism in which we are. Austerity arrives as a principle of public management. Faced with an abundance that was only illusory, the adjustment and the lack of budget for local policies are imposed as a mantra.

[Philip Monaghan](#) has recently published a book addressing this situation and appealing to those involved in local public management not to go into paralysis and, above all, not to find in austerity an excuse to abandon the sustainable transformation of cities. [Sustainability in austerity. How local government can deliver during times of crisis](#) is written to serve as a reference on concrete actions that from the point of view of sustainability are still possible in these times, either because their implementation cost is low or because, above all, they are capable of generating economic returns that justify them.



As a text that intends to fulfill the function of a manual, the suggestions can surely be very theoretical if they are not placed in the context of each municipal organization, a context in which many variables enter: institutional leadership, drive capacity, realism and coherence in the own strategy (when there is one), technical capabilities, etc. Beyond this, the book details just over a hundred supposedly neutral measures in economic terms. Some of them have to do with the restructuring of internal decision-making bodies to integrate sustainability into municipal policies (something that, in fact, does not even have to do with the current times of austerity, but with the always necessary task of being consistent in decisions). Other ideas fall into the realm of common sense, almost. Because, somehow, small sustainability actions have a strong component of economic rationality. For this reason, although the great transformations of sustainable urbanism require in many cases strong investments, there are always actions that cannot be renounced and that are still available in times of austerity: efficient management of heating or air conditioning in public buildings or the lighting of streets and buildings.

A collection of types of actions that, in any case, are already well known, but for which austerity should not work as an obstacle. Or a reminder that the efficient management of public spending has many more holes than we sometimes see and that sustainability does not always have to involve large transformation costs.

There are no comments yet.