

## The challenge of building sustainable cities in Brazil.



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Sustainable Development (very)Short Bio: Information Centre Coordination at Global Forum 1992, Executive Director and Undersecretary of Public Investment at ADM City Development Agency – Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro, Head Coordination at FORDES RIO – The Rio de Janeiro State Development Forum; Former Acting Regional Director ICLEI-LACS (implementation of Global Campaigns: The CCP/ Cities for Climate Protection, The LALA21 Local Agenda and The Water Campaign; Rio+10 South Africa WSSD LAC Municipalities Group Attendance Coordination Group 2002), Urban Management and Sustainable Development GUDS International Program Graduate/ UN ECLAC - World Bank - UN Habitat at Universidad Ibero Americana, Santo Domingo – Dominican Republic 2001), Former National Director at ChildFund International Brazil 2006 (Design and Implementation of Human Sustainable Development Program PDHS in Semiarid Region, Presented the CCF Voices of Children on Poverty in Brazil at Washington DC Conference), GWU-CAF-FGV International Public Governance Program Brazil 2016, CoalitionWild International Mentorship Program 2020-21, WildHub Member 2020. National Award in Child Education by Foundation Abrinq 2004, The Operation Smiles Award, and 3 x awarded with The Bem Eficiente – Well Efficient National Prize in NGO Transparent and Effective Management by Kanitz Institute, Brazil. Certifications in FR, Social Project Management, Logical Framework held in Brazil and abroad.

We have observed a lot in the media, about the theme of “Green Cities, Ecocities or Sustainable Cities”\*\*, among different names by which the municipalities and cities in different countries are known, that decided to embrace a development pattern that has as a fundamental characteristic: the fact that [they become more human-friendly in their urban planning and development projects](#). I’ve had the insight to write a short article about the subject a decade ago that was originally published (in Portuguese) at a local newspaper and then rewired at LinkedIn.

In that same occasion the perspective unfortunately was same as today’s debrief: Our country’s reality showcase that aside from cultural, economic, and social dimensions, the desire to have the Brazilian capitals and metropolises in this relationship in the near future is “as much improbable as totally impossible” to achieve. The exception in Brazil continues to attend by the name of [Curitiba](#), the capital city of Paraná state, which has already been considered a Sustainable City internationally, although much needs to be done realistically these days to permanently consolidate this nomination. Just a local visit or a search in the [updated news](#) will be enough to make this clearer...

This is mainly due to the difficulties encountered in structuring "friendly" cities that have already surpassed the mark of 12.2 million inhabitants – as is the case of [São Paulo](#) (if we consider the metropolitan region and neighborhood, we easily reach over 21.5 million), or 6.7 million in the case of [Rio de Janeiro](#), [Brasília](#) (Brazilian Federal Capital) with its 3.0 million, [Salvador](#) with 2.8 million, or [Fortaleza](#) and its 2.6 million, among other examples.

According to [IBGE / The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics](#), the list of the 15 most populous municipalities in Brazil accounts for over 43% of the total Brazilian population, reaching the gigantic number of more than 92.0 million people inhabiting their urban spaces. Among the so-called internationally sustainable cities, to give you an idea, only [San Francisco](#) (USA) and [Sydney](#) (Australia) can be considered "Metropolises" on the path of Sustainability. And for the record, the city of S. Francisco-CA, USA has just fewer than 1 million inhabitants. Sydney- Australia has about 5.2 million inhabitants.

Decades of neglect with the management of urban plans and guidelines in the largest Brazilian cities, lavish on putting visions of sustainability that are even adequate - in some cases, but [also fails by disconnected public administrations](#), the projects that must have to be done and the lack of alternatives for sustainable development are available to the medium-sized municipalities.

There is very few effective contributions of public administrations in general, in design and the implementation of urban development plans that make a direct connection between the "ideal" and the "possible" by their mayors and the legislative branches, to uphold the investment in the training of its essential collaborators, and to boost the [political will](#) to put into practice urban planning solutions and alternatives that can be prioritized in municipal, state and federal public budgets. And of course, to bring them binded with our [SDG / ODS Global Agenda](#).

Allied to this, public managers need to call the population that inhabits their municipalities to be part of this transformation process – bringing this collaboration from the role of "mere citizen objects" to that of "inhabitant subjects" [of the mobilization for the sustainable development of their spaces](#). This will bring significant impacts on issues such as supply, waste disposal, energy generation, transport, and urban mobility, geopolitical relations, among others.

For small municipalities and cities, on the other hand, work can be structured – if not more easily, at least with reference to the "not to do's", in terms of growth and development, using in addition to their cultural, social and economic vocations, their own capacity to learn by observation the mistakes and even disasters caused by peers, with the non-observance in the adoption of sustainable models.

Some of these disasters are still very recent, just as the announced Dam tragedies of [Mariana](#) and [Brumadinho](#) (both in the state of Minas Gerais) that affected a large group of neighborhood municipalities and dozens all the way down to the Atlantic Ocean in the south of Espirito Santo state, with loss of hundreds of human lives and a very deep impact for years to come. [And the year of 2019 was far considered the worst for Brazil's environment agenda.](#)

And we must learn from them.

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\*\*An updated 2020 list of cities considered sustainable you can find in <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/urban-expeditions/green-buildings/sustainable-cities-graphic-urban-expeditions/>

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