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## Sustainable city

Discussing the concept of “sustainable” cities with Michèle PAPPALARDO is always exciting. She has been, successively, President of the French Agency for the Environment and Energy control (ADEME), French Commissioner General and Interministerial Delegate for Sustainable Development and in the function of Legal Counsellor at the prestigious Cour des Comptes (the National Comptroller’s Office). Moreover, she has recently been appointed Federative Overseer for the “Living better in our cities” programme initiated by Ms Nicole BRICQ, Minister for International Trade, with the remit to organise and coordinate the offer made by French companies in favour of sustainable cities.

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## **Is there a specific French approach to the sustainable city?**

Yes, indeed, I think there is a particularly French approach to the sustainable city. This consists of applying an integrated vision of various urban component constituents, seen as an eco-system and without a need to segment issues such as transportation, waste management, water or power supplies, air, parks, data circulation, etc. My mission today is to demonstrate how 'French style' sustainable cities would comply with this global vision, seen as becoming more and more attractive round the world. New solutions arise when we adopt the urban ecosystem approach, and these help maximise overall city performance factors. For example, a given building can embody the 'best energy saving design' going, but its global performance rating will still depend on the existence of lean-energy transportation to get there, and get home.

## **Smart or sustainable cities ... what intelligence lies in the concept of sustainable cities?**

Sustainable cities really become 'intelligent' when they incorporate the best available technologies, notably in the field of digitised or numeric data, but with the proviso that they are used not only to meet the needs of the citizens but also to prove lean in energy consumption, efficient in performance and attractive. Performance must not be the target if it runs counter to a certain life style or cultural standards. The risk, obviously, is that the inhabitants will not accept the changes. This in turn implies that we must not simply see technology as a bolt-on process, no matter how advanced these technologies may be, nor should we seek to enforce a single, simplified model to every country. Solutions must be adapted to local contexts, to culture, to history, to the complexity of urban environments; we must seek to understand the city's inhabitants if we wish to offer buildings, areas,

complete cities that they will learn to accept and cherish. France's cities have this likeable 'touch' and their inhabitants are quite happy with their surroundings and facilities: our challenge is to valorise the process!

## **Do you think your mission can come up to the expectations of the actors in this field?**

France's major building contractors, our transportation sector, our energy and water utilities are world famous. Our architects, our urban designers and architecture design offices have extremely high reputations; our SMEs are 'innovation intensive'. More and more of the actors above are beginning to share the vision of a sustainable city – and this is where the concept must be formalised, to be in a better position to sell it to our customers, viz., the elected officers in the cities and towns and the local citizens. For instance, if we were to answer a call to tender for a new tramway route, we could propose the carriages and the rails ... and at the same time a positive vision of the consequences in terms of urban improvements. This global vision demands that the industrialists work together to come up with an integrated coherent offer. Each actor here, of course, has specific high level skills, know-how ... and at the same time, he can understand what the other partners are offering too. It proves to be a highly stimulating yet complex way to implement the task, but it is now seen with enthusiasm. The actors, overall, are now aware that there is a need to move forward together. Witness the recent collaboration between COSEI (a strategic committee formed by the eco-industrial sector representatives) and AFEP (French association for private entrepreneurial concerns). There are, however, several obstacles to working in a transverse manner, if only some of the stipulations in the Labour Code. If we want to have show-case examples in France for this integrated global approach, then we must have joint offers made in response to calls to tender for rehabilitation of a city precinct, and this is simply just not possible with current rules and regulations.

## **Are there some identifiable markets where you could export the concept of sustainable cities?**

In order to avoid spreading my efforts too far, I would like to concentrate on 3 to 4 countries, to test the response to our methodology, to adapt the approach in terms of local contexts, and look for the best consortiums possible. My first two priorities are China and Morocco. In China, the thematic of sustainable cities was addressed during the recent presidential state visit by François Hollande to China, notably on the occasion of a renewed contractual agreement to co-operate on a pilot zone called Greater Wuhan (Hubei Province) with its 12 M inhabitants. There are two factors that make the Middle Empire attractive as a possible market outlet: the Chinese are aware of some mistakes they made in planning some recent cities, built at full speed without any real global vision. Here is a place where we could demonstrate our skills, all the more so that our "urban system" corresponds fairly closely to their dual wish for harmony and balance. In the case of Morocco, certain new sustainable cities have been built there, notably integrating some complex problems in terms of mobility. I would like to see France in a position to associate our national skills to propose efficient urban areas to the Moroccans, thanks to a better integrated approach. The good marker for my mission will be to see the approach 'exported' by the industrialists outside the pilot areas on which I want to start.

## **Did you know this ?**

The sustainable city concept is taking shape in France, thanks to the impetus of the Sustainable City Plan and the French Government's Investments for the Future incentive programme. France now has 9 show-case cities (and the list is growing: Greater Bordeaux, Greater Strasbourg, Greater Lyons, Grenoble-Alpes Conurbation, Issy-les-Moulineaux, Lille Conurbation, Marseille Euroméditerranée, Nice Côte d'Azur Conurbation and Nantes Conurbation [www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr)).

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