

## How Citizens Can Ostensibly Help Mitigate Climate Change, Enhance Sustainable Energy, and Make the Public Richer Through Free and Open Environmental Trade

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The scientific community is by now almost in unanimous agreement that the greenhouse gas effect is real. The level of GHG emissions in the atmosphere has increased. There are clear policy actions to tackle climate change: mitigation, adaptation and geoengineering. As a result of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, new avenues to tackle climate change more effectively have emerged. One interesting case in point is the fact that mayors, governors and CEOs are involved.

This shift to what we describe as a ‘bottom-up approach’ in the democratic (in the true sense of the term) implementation of climate change mitigation plans,,a creation of the Paris Agreement, the locomotive of climate action,,is one of the mega-trends of the 21st century.

Since 80% of global economic activity takes place in cities and since 80% of GHG emissions comes from cities, this new mega-trend of climate action at the city-level is very promising. So why should cities take climate action? Because they are the main polluters and the main implementers of legislation, because today the majority of the world’s population lives in cities - and this trend to urban migration is on the rise - and because mayors of cities are pragmatic with global issues such as climate change, poverty or terrorism. Also because such issues are too big for nation-states and because cities arguably offer better governance on these matters. Furthermore, some of the greatest environmental and social challenges comes from cities: food, water, waste, infrastructure, transport. Moreover, mayors tend to come from the cities they govern and therefore have a much higher level of trust than politicians at the national level.

One very promising development in the twenty-first century is the empowerment of citizens on issues of common concern such as climate change, sustainable energy, and international trade. Citizens’ empowerment means that civil society can play an important role in the new challenges of trade diplomacy, such as the integration of non-economic aspects of trade in trade policy and in the inclusion of trade policies in the democratic debate. This approach makes the system of decision-making closer to the citizens and therefore less technocratic. Citizens’ empowerment could potentially help mitigate climate change, enhance sustainable energy, and develop a more democratic and transparent trade policy-making process. Moving forward, citizens need to contribute to finding more effective ways to obtain sustainable energy and mitigate climate change. Citizen participation is a promising way of providing better management of environmental issues.

This novel idea of greater citizen participation is very promising in helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The paper shows several areas where citizens can ostensibly help mitigate climate change, enhance sustainable energy, and make citizens richer through free and open environmental trade. Citizens’ empowerment can be achieved by allowing for more participation in the process of decision-making.

