

Selling sustainability as a sacrifice has failed

By Wayne Visser

Part 1 of an interview by SAPO.

When I delivered a keynote on thriving at the Innovation, Sustainability and Regeneration Hub conference in Porto a few weeks ago, I was interviewed by SAPO in Portugal. Here is Part 1. You can read the Portuguese version [here](#).

SAPO: *Everyone is talking about sustainability, everyone wants to live in a better, more sustainable world. And yet, we seem to never get out of the discussion on how to be sustainable you have to give up some of the things that make our life more comfortable (be it individual transportation or traveling around the world or even giving up on fast fashion...) or reduce profits. Is that a discussion that makes sense?*

Wayne: Trying to “sell sustainability” as a sacrifice—or to scare people into being more sustainable—is a 50-year experiment that has totally failed. This is why we need innovation—to bring products and services that regenerate nature, society and the economy, but are not more expensive, or less convenient, or lower quality. When BYD markets its electric vehicles, it does not talk about saving the planet, it talks about a competitive price, excellent safety, high performance, and low maintenance costs.

SAPO: *Is it possible to actually increase profits by becoming more sustainable?*

Wayne: Absolutely. There are many business benefits from investing in sustainability: lower risks from stakeholder relations, more resilience in supply chains, recruitment and retention of talent (especially among younger generations), improved reputation, cost savings from resource efficiency, avoided penalties from anticipating regulation, and access to finance through ESG funds. Also, many of the fastest growing sectors and businesses are linked to sustainability, like clean tech and nature tech.

SAPO: *Your intervention focuses on ten emerging technologies that have what it takes to save the planet in a decade. What are those miracle working techs?*

Wayne: In energy, the combination of solar, wind and batteries are rapidly becoming the cheapest and most sustainable electricity source. We have electric vehicles and green hydrogen (made using renewable energy) set to decarbonise energy-intensive industries like transport, cement, steel and chemicals. In agriculture, green ammonia in fertilisers, precision fermentation and cellular agriculture are lowering impacts. Meanwhile, biomaterials, Earth Information Systems (EIS) and AI also show great promise.

Dr Wayne Visser is holder of the Galp Chair and a Professor of Practice in Regenerative Business, Innovation and Technology at Católica Porto Business School, as well as a

Fellow and Head Program Instructor at the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.

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