Societal Shifts, Sustainability and the role of Universities

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What do we mean by sustainability?

- Multiple dimensions (not just decarbonization):
  - Inter-generational equity
    - Bio-diversity
    - Human and social capital
    - Physical capital
  - Intra-generational equity
    - Rawlsian perspective?
  - Increasing the pie
    - What kind of growth?
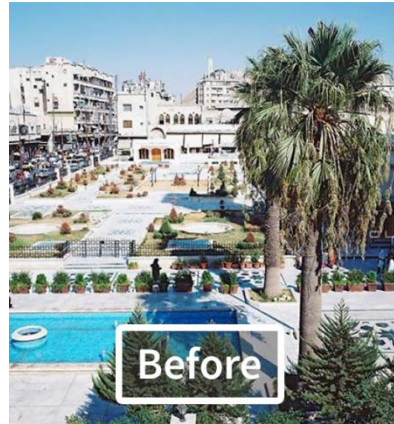- Missing Dimensions

Some Missing Dimensions

- Security
  - External
  - Safety
- Heritage
  - What should be preserved?
  - Who decides what should be preserved?
  - How should conservation be conducted?

Before   After

Recent Societal shifts

- Closing of borders:
  - Reduced mobility and life-chances to the less fortunate
- Greater global (environmental) awareness
- Global agreements (Paris)

- Undermining of institutions
  - EPA
  - Planning (Israel, Netherlands, UK)

  - International agreements?
- Governance

Governance going bad?

- Elected officials denying scientific evidence
- Undermining of professional prestige
- Harassment of NGOs
- Undermining the credibility of the Media
  - "fake news"
  - Social media
- Corruption
- Loss of trust in institutions and intent

The Role of Universities (regular)

- Increasing human and social capital
  - Teaching/supervising
  - Research
  - Networking (across settings)
- Providing technological solutions
- Raising policy options
- Multi-scalar appraisal of trends and possibilities
- Serve as beta-sites for innovations
- Conservation of threatened species

But Universities Need to do much More

- Speaking truth to power
- Raising questions
  - Regarding policy options
  - Regarding 'story lines' of various interests
- Reframing issues
  - Suggesting alternative 'story lines'
- Encouraging pluralism
  - Acknowledging the legitimacy of differences
  - By example