

Urban Sustainable Development, Lower Income Communities, and Transorganizational Public Administration

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Abstract: This article will provide an analysis of the implementation of sustainable development policies in lower-income urban communities. Arguably, sustainable development policies can potentially improve the overall environmental and economic quality of life for people living within such communities. This, however, presents a challenge for public policy and administration on how best to manage and administer sustainable development policies within this context. Consequently, this paper will focus on the “transorganizational” approach to public administration, which arguably best fits a sustainable development model.

Keywords: sustainable development, transorganizational, livable communities

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000, a family of four was considered to be living in poverty if their annual income was less than \$17,603.00. According to the 2000 census, 9.2% of American families live below the poverty level. However, this number is higher in urban areas in which “Young Americans growing up in the inner cities have few opportunities to fight their way out of the poverty trap and few models to prove that it can be done.”^[1] This has caused many families, especially in urban areas to double up on housing. For example, in California there are 2.87 persons per household on average, whereas in the City of Santa Ana there are 4.5 persons per household on average.^[2] Moreover, as Dolbeare notes, for the most part housing problems have been limited to low-income and minority people. Basically, white families who are steadily employed with middle class wages were able to maintain

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decent housing. While these families may have paid more than they desired, or forced to rent rather than own, or forced to own when they would rather rent, they did nevertheless experience no real housing problems. Undesirable housing, as Dolbeare describes it, is basically substandard in that housing presents either “a health or safety hazard, or the household paid so much that it couldn’t afford the essentials of life.”^[3] This latter description best describes the situation of minorities in urban United States.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Over the past thirty years, the distribution in wealth has become increasingly polarized in which the wealthiest 20% of the population have become wealthier and the lowest 40% have become increasingly poor.^[4] But what causes this? One way to conceptually explain this issue is through the spatial mismatch phenomenon. This theory holds that jobs have moved out of urban areas, where lower income populations tend to live, and into the suburbs where wealthier individuals live. The imbalance between jobs and housing is important for policy makers to know since the people who most need the work are unable to get living wage jobs. Suffice it to say, the simplest alternative to correcting this imbalance is to encourage (financially and politically) business investment in lower income areas or to provide a public transit system to get people to the jobs. Consequently, it is important to consider several factors that make these alternatives lack feasibility. As such, this article will focus on implementation of sustainable development as a solution to the spatial mismatch problem.

Spatial Mismatch

The spatial mismatch theory was first introduced by Kain in his analysis of African–American employment levels and metropolitan housing segregation.^[5] Utilizing data from Chicago and Detroit, Kain tested the hypothesis that racial segregation in the housing market not only affects the distribution and availability of African–American employment but, the post-World War II job market, which moved to suburbia, aggravated the problem. Kain concludes that, “even so the empirical findings do suggest that postwar suburbanization of metropolitan employment may be further undermining the position of (African Americans), and that the continued high levels of unemployment in a full employment economy may be partially attributable to the rapid and adverse shifts in the location of jobs.”^[6] Essentially, he found that as jobs move from the city center to the suburbs, residents that live in lower income communities (which tend to be located towards the city center) have difficulty getting jobs because of a lack of reliable transportation.

How can a community measure the intensity of spatial mismatch? One method is to analyze the commute times. In theory, the longer people spend commuting, the worse a region's spatial mismatch. However, theorists such as DeRango caution that the relationship between commute times and spatial mismatch are indeterminable. This is because there are many possibilities for external factors that can lengthen or shorten commute times.^[7]

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development can be defined basically as the development which establishes the fundamental needs of current populations without compromising the future generation's ability to meet their own needs.^[8] The goal of sustainable development has multiple objectives is to provide increases in real income per capita, improve the health and nutrition of populations, increase educational achievement, provide better access to natural resources, provide a fairer distribution of income, and increase basic freedoms, thereby providing opportunities to lower income residents. Sustainable development theorists argue that "the requirement is for nonnegative change in the stock of natural resources and environmental quality. In basic terms, the environment should not be degraded further, but improvements should be welcome."^[9]

In addition to the aforementioned goals of sustainable development, according to there are six principles, which are essential: creating a harmony between development and nature, building livable communities, place based economics, increasing equity among all people, making polluters pay for polluting, and responsible regionalism.^[10] Moreover, there are two different views of sustainability, defined as "weak" and "strong." As Pearce and Barbier state "according to the 'weak' sustainability view, there is essentially no inherent difference between natural and other forms of resources. Hence, the same optimal depletion rules ought to apply to both."^[11] Essentially, Pearce and Barbier argue that as long as the increase in other forms of resources (physical and human) is greater than the reduction of natural resources, then the overall resources are considered increasing. Conversely, the "strong" sustainability view states that physical and human resources is not a substitution for natural resources. As such, natural resources must be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Environmental Justice

Oyewole defines environmental justice as basically the pursuit of justice without racial, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic discrimination including the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations and the securing of fair public health policy.^[12] In lower income areas, land values are lower

and the zoning regulations tend to be more lenient. This combination makes it easier for industries to locate in lower income communities generally without fear of environmental restrictions impacting business. Yet private sector businesses are not the only entities that ignore the virtues of environmental justice. In 1855, according to Porter and Tarrant, a community which was called Seneca Village (in which today is Manhattan) was displaced in order to make room for the development of New York City's Central Park. Approximately 70% of its 284 residents were African American. Essentially, it was cheaper and easier to displace the African American community than it would have been to displace a wealthy white community.^[13] Moreover, Oyewole argues that minority communities experienced lower average penalties with the enforcement of the Clean Air Act, by 8%; the Safe Drinking Water Act, by 15%; the Clean Water Act, by 28%; and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, by a staggering 506%.^[14] These types of violations led to the federal actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (Executive Order No. 12898).

Job/Housing Balance and Affordable Housing

One aspect of sustainable development is to provide a jobs/housing balance. The intent of a jobs/housing balance is to locate housing near job centers while keeping in mind the rules for environmental justice. Ideally public transportation nodes will be located near both job and housing centers. Accomplishing this will reduce commute times and traffic congestions, which in turn will also reduce air pollution. However, providing a jobs/housing balance is not enough, for it does not help lower income families to be close to their jobs if they still can't afford to pay rent or mortgage. Nevertheless, one problematic remains: housing costs have been on the rise. An example can be seen in Southern California, as noted in Table 1.

Moreover, if the median income of each of the aforementioned counties is considered, and the moderate income level is set at 120% of the median income, and low income at 80% of the median income, and very low income at 50% of the median income, and extremely low income at 30% of the median income, then the breakdown of income levels is depicted in Table 2.

Thus, if affordable housing is defined as spending no more than 30% of a family's monthly gross income towards rent or a mortgage payment, then based on the abovementioned income levels, a family is able to spend on housing cost, relative to other local area's housing costs (Table 3).

Particularly in the low and extremely low income brackets, it becomes increasingly difficult for a family to obtain decent housing for 30% of their income. As such, subsidies are needed to reduce the cost of housing to these families.

Table 1. Housing Costs

County	Owner Occupied Monthly Housing Cost With Mortgage			Median Gross Rent			Median Family Income		
	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change	1990	2000	% Change
Imperial	\$ 670	\$1,026	53.1%	\$394	\$504	27.9%	\$22,442	\$35,226	57.0%
Los Angeles	\$1,137	\$1,524	34.0%	\$626	\$704	12.5%	\$34,965	\$46,452	32.9%
Orange	\$1,317	\$1,717	30.4%	\$790	\$923	16.8%	\$45,922	\$64,611	40.7%
Riverside	\$1,050	\$1,268	20.8%	\$572	\$660	15.4%	\$33,081	\$48,409	46.3%
San Bernardino	\$ 960	\$1,202	25.2%	\$556	\$648	16.5%	\$33,443	\$46,574	39.3%
Ventura	\$1,305	\$1,671	28.0%	\$754	\$892	18.3%	\$45,612	\$65,285	43.1%
SCAG	\$1,073	\$1,401	30.6%	\$615	\$722	17.3%	\$35,911	\$51,093	42.3%
California	\$1,077	\$1,478	37.2%	\$620	\$747	20.5%	\$35,798	\$53,025	48.1%

Table 2. Income Levels

County	Income Levels Based on 2000 Census				
	Median	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Extremely Low
Imperial	\$35,226	\$42,271	\$28,181	\$17,613	\$10,568
Los Angeles	\$46,452	\$55,742	\$37,162	\$23,226	\$13,936
Orange	\$64,611	\$77,533	\$51,689	\$32,306	\$19,383
Riverside	\$48,409	\$58,091	\$38,727	\$24,205	\$14,523
San Bernardino	\$46,574	\$55,889	\$37,259	\$23,287	\$13,972
Ventura	\$65,285	\$78,342	\$52,228	\$32,643	\$19,586
SCAG	\$51,093	\$61,312	\$40,874	\$25,547	\$15,328
California	\$53,025	\$63,630	\$42,420	\$26,513	\$15,908

Table 3. Affordable Housing Cost

County	Affordable Housing Cost							
	Moderate		Low		Very Low		Extremely Low	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Imperial	\$ 673	\$1,057	\$449	\$ 705	\$281	\$440	\$168	\$264
Los Angeles	\$1,049	\$1,394	\$699	\$ 929	\$437	\$581	\$262	\$348
Orange	\$1,378	\$1,938	\$918	\$1,292	\$574	\$808	\$344	\$485
Riverside	\$ 992	\$1,452	\$662	\$ 968	\$414	\$605	\$248	\$363
San Bernardino	\$1,003	\$1,397	\$669	\$ 931	\$418	\$582	\$251	\$349
Ventura	\$1,368	\$1,959	\$912	\$1,306	\$570	\$816	\$342	\$490
SCAG	\$1,077	\$1,533	\$718	\$1,022	\$449	\$639	\$269	\$383
California	\$1,074	\$1,591	\$716	\$1,061	\$447	\$663	\$268	\$398

PLANNING POLICY

It is imperative that sustainable development policies be incorporated into a community’s planning policies, precisely because these policies determine the pattern, method, and rate of development within a community. For Ennis–Reynolds, planning policies must include regeneration of natural resources and social awareness of community’s needs.^[15] In fact, Hanna argues that sustainability could be a vague, even elusive concept, however for planners the concept of sustainability is helpful as a structural concept for organizing and planning a particular community’s intent to change.^[16] This specific intent is what generally structures planning strategies in urban settings. As a result planning has become increasingly aware of the need to incorporate sustainable strategies for future urban needs. This has been a benefit with respect to overall planning.

A Tale of Two Cities

The towns of Tofino and Ucluelet are approximately 25 miles apart on the western portion of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Each town has less than 1,700 permanent inhabitants. However, during the summer the tourist population of the area can increase to approximately 5,000 people. Each town employs less than 20 full time people, which did not include a professional planner until after 1997. Prior to 1997, each town used the regional district to provide planning services. The key difference between the two towns is that Tofino introduced planning to address impacts from rapid growth of tourism, whereas, Ucluelet introduced the planning function to promote and facilitate growth.^[17]

As each town created its planning policies and revised its Official Community Plan (OCP), each community's idea of sustainability became evident. Tofino's plan articulated promoting a sustainable healthy community and defines sustainability as integrating economic, environmental, and social qualities into land use decisions. Tofino's OCP created policies for growth management, land use, economic development, and conservation of environmental resources. Furthermore, the OCP created an implementation and monitoring strategy for the sustainable development. Similarly, Ucluelet's plan was built on the same strategies. In addition, Ucluelet required that the decision making process for planners include sustainable strategies.^[18]

Phoenix Strategy

One such example of the Tofino and Ucluelet models is seen in The Phoenix Strategy, whose primary aim is to improve old and run down housing. Updating existing housing stock can be important, since as new stock is built people tend to invest in new homes rather than old homes. Without this investment, older homes become dilapidated, which lowers property values and the net worth for the owners of these properties. To accomplish the goals of this strategy, according to Carmon,^[19] Phoenix set the following three objectives:

- Urban objectives: maintaining neighborhoods' health and preventing deterioration, halting deterioration where it starts, and supporting neighborhood regeneration;
- Social objectives: improving the quality of life of the participating households, diversifying neighborhoods, and enhancing social equity; and
- Economic–environmental objectives: extending the useful life of existing residential buildings, their physical infrastructure (roads, pipes), and social services (schools, clinics), and thus achieving for individuals and public bodies financial savings as well as environmental benefits; these benefits include preventing urban sprawl, saving open spaces, decreasing dependence

on private vehicles, reducing energy consumption and air pollution, and introducing ecology-friendly materials and systems into the existing urban fabric.

Livable Communities

Another example of sustainable development can be found within the Los Angeles region. More specifically, the South Bay Council of Governments (SBCOG) has begun a program called Livable Communities. The SBCOGs consist of 16 cities located to the southwest section of Los Angeles County, which includes the cities of Carson, El Segundo, Gardena, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Torrance, and the San Pedro and Harbor City areas of the City of Los Angeles.

The objective of the Livable Community Program (LCP) is to change the development in this region, which was mostly built in the 1950's and 1960's, into a sustainable development plan. To accomplish this, the LCP incorporates eight elements.^[20]

1. **Design**—Streets, buildings and public spaces should be designed to human scale so that pedestrian access is ensured. Urban design should be used to enhance safety, prosperity and beauty, while preserving links to natural, cultural and architectural history.
2. **Center Focus**—A community is strengthened by an economically healthy town center or downtown combining commercial, cultural, civic and recreational uses. The center should be linked to both local and regional public transportation systems. Residential neighborhoods also benefit from an appropriately scaled center focus that enhances neighborhood identity and character.
3. **Public Spaces**—Livable communities require open spaces that serve the entire community in the form of parks, squares and greens. Boulevards, streets, and paths should also be designed to be beautiful pleasant places. Public spaces should be designed to encourage their use throughout the day and into the night, making them safer and more of a community asset.
4. **Balanced Transportation**—The transportation system should balance pedestrian, transit, and auto access to reduce dependence on autos and provide secure, convenient and affordable mobility for all citizens. Compact land use patterns improve access to jobs, recreation, shopping and community services for all ages and incomes. Streets, pedestrian and bike paths are linked in a system of fully connected and interesting routes to all destinations.
5. **Diversity**—Livable communities contain a mix of housing and employment opportunities for citizens from all ages, ethnicities, and incomes. Civic facilities and services reflect the needs of the residents.

6. **Environmental Sustainability**—Livable communities conserve resources, natural habitat and air quality so as not to jeopardize the quality of life of future generations. Energy conservation is encouraged by the design and placement of buildings, shading and landscaping.
7. **Public Safety**—Livable communities are places where streets, buildings and public spaces are designed to human scale so that pedestrian safety is ensured. Safer neighborhoods improve the quality of life, add to the attractiveness of a community, and create a sense of identity and place.
8. **Full Community Participation**—Livable communities come from the full participation of residents, neighborhood organizations and the business community. Information and education about planning, land use and transportation issues and policies are readily available to promote involvement in decision-making.

Livable Communities can be obtained through both short and long term objectives. Short term objectives include:

1. investing and upgrading existing infrastructure;
2. protecting existing building stock that has the ability to become pedestrian friendly;
3. altering zoning ordinances to encourage new development to comply with livable community standards, and
4. encouraging mixed use and multiple family developments.

Long term objectives include:

1. creating high density residential and commercial developments that are pedestrian and bicycle friendly,
2. expanding public transit networks such that jobs are located near residential and employment nodes, and
3. develop streets that are pedestrian, car, and bicycle friendly.^[21]

MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

One method of determining the success and/or failures of a sustainable development policy is through economic indicators. Pearce and Barbier (2000) specify that the following indicators can be used by:

1. measuring wealth (the change in the per capita stocks of assets),
2. modifying GDP (the Gross Domestic Product with the loss of non-renewable products),
3. genuine savings (the amount of money saved minus capital assets),

4. technological change (the change in the productivity of each unit of capital), and
5. social capital (certain features within the social organization).

Increases in these indicators provide evidence that the policy is being implemented successfully.

A second method of measuring the success and/or failure of sustainable development policies is through ecological indicators. These include biodiversity indicators (the range of variation in all living organizations and their environments), species richness and extinction (the rate of extinction of species), ecological resilience (the ability of an ecosystem to recover from shocks and stresses), ecological carrying capacity (the density of species that an ecosystem can contain). As these indicators increase, except extinction rates which should decrease, one can assess whether sustainable development policies are working. The key is to discover a managerial method and administrative tool that can best fit this approach to sustainable practices in urban settings.

TRANSORGANIZATIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The challenge facing the implementation of sustainable development policies in lower income communities is to devise managerial and administrative tools that best fit this agenda. One of the major assertions in this work is that public administrators—if they wish to focus on implementing methods to facilitate sustainable development policies in lower income communities—must broaden the way they conceive, formulate, and implement public policies and programs. While the “reinventing government” trend of entrepreneurial creativity in public administration has been popularized throughout the United States,^[22] others argue that public administration must also attempt to see themselves as facilitators and educators where “problems and issues must be approached through a truly ‘transorganizational’ frame of reference (rather than the) narrow perspectives and preoccupation with ‘turf’.”^[23]

One way to actualize the transorganizational method is for public administrators to take on the role of facilitator and educator in helping citizens understand the strategic importance between lower income communities and sustainable development policies. Public administrators as educators have the potential to create venues that replicate deliberative processes, which provide information and critiques of policies and their implications. In essence, public administrators as facilitators and educators can provide a locale for debate in which people know their views are taken seriously. This can also be understood in terms of public administrators facilitating public education and disseminating pertinent information for public consumption. In attempting to provide a venue for citizens to participate in their own governing process, public administrators thus engender greater democratic governance, especially

those in lower-income communities who, arguably, might tend to be alienated from the government and governance. Moreover, the “transorganizational” role for public administration provides an ideal method for implementing sustainable development policies in all communities. This is precisely because the transorganizational model seeks to implicitly solicit relevant information, not only to empower others in the governing process, but to implement those policies (in this case sustainable development policies) that respect the environmental integrity of local communities. Thus, a transorganizational framework acts to insulate the public from an “increasingly polarized and disenfranchised citizenry.”^[24]

One way to promote a transorganizational framework is to focus on the notion of “interconnectedness” as an important feature in public administration. According to Barth, interconnectedness establishes a contextual environment in which power is shared by numerous public and private organizations.^[25] The implications are that policy and administration will examine issues related to lower-income communities in different conceptual terms so that poorer communities see themselves as government itself rather than having government remain distant and aloof in their lives. Arguably, this approach provides citizens with a more accessible venue for addressing issues related to the needs to lower-income communities such as crime, affordable housing, job training, education, drug treatment, sex education, and so on. Since public agencies and non-profit programs are highly active in the formation and implementation of policies and programs in this regard, it becomes increasingly clear that the public sector is in need of embracing a more holistic, or transorganizational public administration model for the good of its citizenry.

CONCLUSION

From 1980 to 1996 the average number of vehicle miles traveled increased 82%, while households only increased 42% during the same period.^[26] This is created by people commuting from suburb to suburb, rather than to traditional downtown business centers. These longer commutes have a greater impact on lower income families, who spend a greater percentage of their income on commuting expenses. Furthermore, in order to protect lower income communities President Clinton signed Executive Order No. 12898, on February 11, 1994, making environmental justice a priority for the federal government. Additionally, it required all federal land management agencies to assess all policies and practices in the perspective of environmental justice. The agencies were to examine if the programs were locally unwanted and had the potential of causing adverse impacts to the communities in which they are located, or does the program provide positive benefits, such as economic, to the community, thus making it locally supported.

Sustainable development can be a useful planning tool in order to create livable communities for the lower income population. This process allows cities to approve development projects that are geared to counter act the spatial mismatch that is seen in urban areas. Additionally, the use of sustainable development ensures that cities are moving towards the goal of environmental sustainability, a safe public, open space, and mobility for all citizens through a workable transportation system. By implementing sustainable development policies and building livable communities, public organizations can increase the standard of living in lower income communities, without making those communities unaffordable for lower income residents.

ACRONYMS

LCP	Livable Community Program
OCP	Official Community Plan
SBCOG	South Bay Council of Governments
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments

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