

APSE Municipal Green Energy

Building urban regimes for sustainable development

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Environmental regimes

- Cities as ‘laboratories’ in countering climate change (Kamal-Chaoui and Robert, 2009)
- But, sustainable urban development presents a series of ‘wicked issues’
- What ‘visions’ of sustainable urban development exist? How they are produced (and by whom)? How do they (and the logic that inform them) affect policy outcomes? (cf. Williams, 2010).

The study

- Environmental governance in Grenoble and Bristol; two comparably prosperous but polarised cities and ‘exemplars’ of sustainable urban development (Bristol, *European Green Capital*; Grenoble, *EcoCité*)
- Q Methodology, which assesses individuals’ subjective orientations through a ranking of statements and factor analysis, to identify different discourses on urban environmental governance, their resonance for stakeholders, and the boundaries and commonalities between them
- Four distinctive perspectives: moral stewards; progressive reformers; creative collaborators; and public localists.

Moral Stewards

- Commitment to the rights of future generations, acknowledging the 'moral obligation' to act as stewards for them.
- Favour the pursuit of sustainable and resilient economic growth, which is widely and fairly distributed, recognising not only the rights of future generations, but also those of currently excluded social groups and those of non-human species
- Acknowledge the necessity of economic and social change in the face of climate change and peak oil, arguing that the essential problem facing the sustainable development is that humans are living beyond the capacities of the Earth
- Privilege the agency and responsibilities of individuals
- Critical of the effectiveness of markets and business as drivers of sustainable development
- Obstacles towards sustainable development are to be found primarily in the fact that existing regulatory and legal systems do not inform individuals and groups of the global cost of their behaviour in the long-term

Progressive Reformers

- Environment as social justice with demands for radical reform, core challenges emerge from the exploitation of the majority and of the environment by the minority
- A socially unjust city can never be sustainable for it ignores the reciprocal rights and responsibilities of different social groups; rights which extend to future generations and to non-human species
- Requires broader shifts in our ways of thinking, radical change from anthropocentric growth to an ecological form of development where humans work in harmony with nature
- Challenges the effectiveness of technological fixes, and business and market mechanisms, questioning political necessity of economic growth
- Advocate market efficiencies and future proofing. Rather, they argue for radical systemic reforms that bring together ecological alternatives with measures to improve social justice

Creative collaborators

- Combine demands for broader changes to the the systems of thinking that underpin human behaviour with criticisms that there is a lack of creative thinking to address the negative consequences of urban development
- Development of sustainable cities rests on the identification of opportunities to bring together different political, social and economic actors in alternative forms of environmental innovation
- Recognise the role of a strong policy lead from local authorities, bemoan the absence of knowledge dissemination ('good practice'), a lack of leadership and partnership between local firms and citizens
- Question the necessary link between social justice and environmental protection and demonstrate an openness or ambivalence towards market mechanisms
- Foregrounds opportunities for innovative forms of collaboration, public leadership and knowledge as a driver of change, while demonstrating a relative ambivalence to markets and demands for social justice.

Public localists

- Characterised by their support for a strong policy lead from local authorities
- Support for local citizen mobilisation in ways that increase the capacity of local communities to respond to global challenges
- No principled opposition to markets, support synergy between economic development and environmental protection, dismiss criticisms of the inappropriateness of market-based policy instruments
- BUT, challenge the effectiveness of markets as drivers of sustainability, as well as the capacity of technological fixes to deliver sustainable change

Emerging findings

- Relatively weak salience of ecological modernization and technologically oriented perspectives for local actors in Bristol and Grenoble – contrast with established categorisations of sustainable development
- Absence of consensus statements among respondents across the four viewpoints

Moving forward

- Any normative, rhetorical appeal to sustainable development risks falling on a political landscape traversed by inconsistent divisions between actors
- Consensus-oriented deliberative or collaborative forms of governance are limited in their capacity to forge the necessary common ground between competing world views
- We posit an *agonistic* form of ‘pragmatic adversarialism’ as an alternative