Developing Sustainable Communities UEP 284 (Fall 2008)

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Tuesday 1.30-4.00pm in Brown House, 97 Talbot

Office hours: Tuesday 11.00am-1.00am and 4.00pm-6.00pm.

Course Description

This course will explore the many challenges of achieving sustainable development through a coherent and thought provoking overview of moves towards developing sustainable communities. The course will focus on improving the quality of people’s lives, on disinvested communities and on the inequitable distribution of income, wealth and environmental hazards. It will investigate the theory of sustainable development and ask about the principles, tools and techniques and in what contexts we can move towards the ecological integrity, economic security, empowerment, responsibility and social well being characteristic of sustainable communities. Case studies will be drawn from around the world.

Course Objectives

- To begin to understand the content, processes and implications of the sustainable development agenda;
- To begin to understand the principles, tools and techniques available for developing sustainable communities.

Course Reader

A course reader is available for purchase. However, in such a rapidly developing area, perhaps the majority of action is on the Web. Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard as the class progresses. I have also provided some key websites for you to look at.

Assessment

Clearly, to cover the ground of this syllabus will require that students complete the required class readings before each class, and come to class ready to discuss the readings.

The following is how your final grade will be arrived at:

Research essay           40%
Research Essay - Due December 2nd

The research essay can be on any sustainable development or sustainable community theme arising from the course. Because we cannot cover all sustainability topics in one course, students focus their essays on their particular interest area within sustainable development or sustainable communities, such as urban agriculture, climate change or smart growth. You must however link your interest to themes which emerge in the class.

Purely descriptive essays are not acceptable. I am looking for your use of the course and other readings to construct a critical assessment of a particular idea, case, theme, issue or concept that interests you.

Please make an appointment to see me, or have an email conversation with me by October 7th at the latest to discuss your essay title as the title/topic is due on this date. Please hand in a 1 page, double space plan for your essay on October 28th. Essays are due on or before December 2nd.

Late essays will be penalized unless prior approval was given. Essay titles will be allocated if necessary!

Research essays should be around 5,000 words excluding references. They must be typed, double space, with illustrations, diagrams, graphs or charts as you deem appropriate. The format of the essay should be based on a clear introduction that fully explains the topic or theme and the context or issue you are discussing. This should be followed by one or more arguments and supporting evidence which are your critical assessment. This should make up the main body of the paper, followed by a conclusion, where you summarize, and make your position clear. I will be looking for, in addition to a format based on that above, evidence of broad reading within the topic, theme or issue you are discussing.

Essays which solely use internet references are not acceptable!

You should aim to utilize the range of resources offered by the course, written and online, and other peer review materials as appropriate. Clear referencing should be based on the Harvard system where surname of author and date in brackets should be given in the text e.g. Jones (1990), and quotations in your text should give a page number e.g. Jones (1990 p4). Full reference details should be listed in alphabetical order at the end of the paper e.g. Jones, B (1990) ‘Rebel without a clue’ London. Earthscan. However, of paramount importance are original ideas and perspectives. Endnotes are acceptable for issues or words that need explanation, but would break the flow if they were explained in text.
Case Study – Due October 21st

We cannot cover everyone’s pet interests in class but you can choose a case that reflects your interests. The idea here is for you to select one sustainable community initiative that interests you:

- from ‘SustainLane, if you are more nationally focused http://www.sustainlane.us/
- from UN-NGO-IRENE Best Practices Network - Sustainable Development if you are more internationally focused http://esango.un.org/irene/Index?page=listPractices&nr=1

You must email or see me to get prior approval. I need to know your case study title by September 23rd and it’s due on October 21st. Your task is to provide an update, a ‘what’s happening now?’ on the case study you select. These case studies were done in 2000 initially, so you will need to research what’s happening now. PLEASE make sure, before you see me, that the project is ongoing! As you research, you should either try to visit the project, or at least interview someone on the phone about it

We’re looking for a 5 page, double spaced update with the following subheads:

a) case overview (what is the problem/aim, what are the objectives?)
b) organizational and actor analysis (what is the organization, who are the actors involved?)
c) tools and techniques (how are they doing what they do?)
d) recommendations (if you were Executive Director, would you do anything differently?)

Sustainability Journal - Due at the beginning of each class

The goals for this assignment are for you to develop a familiarity with current good news about sustainable development, while exploring further the difference between policy change and paradigm shift approaches, as discussed on September 16th. Approximately one page in length, entries should focus on good news in terms of current events, news stories or other readings. Each should demonstrate that you have been looking outside of class readings to find more current news and events (you should look at the web resources at the end of this syllabus). This informally written journal should point out and describe current (within the last year) good news stories or case studies and whether they exemplify an incremental policy change or paradigm shift approach towards sustainable development.
In the beginning of each class, we will spend a short period of time presenting our stories - each student should be prepared to share, in 3-4 minutes, an example of a paradigm shift. Recent or current news articles will be additionally posted on Blackboard for students to use. Students are encouraged to email Alex news stories or articles that they find of interest, and they will be placed on Blackboard as well.

Class Participation

Your class participation mark of 10% will relate to how well you participate in each discussion during the class. If you do not participate regularly, don’t expect an A!

Tentative Schedule

Part 1

What is Sustainability?

September 2nd Introduction
Definitions and scope of class
The history of sustainable development
Research essay
Case study
Sustainability journal
Participation

September 9th An unhappy planet?

The Happy Planet Index is an innovative new measure that shows the ecological efficiency with which human wellbeing is delivered around the world. It is the first ever index to combine environmental impact with wellbeing to measure the environmental efficiency with which country by country, people live long and happy lives. The results are surprising, even shocking, but there is much to learn from what they show. Another theme of this class is the growing economies of India and China..................

Readings


You can download the full report on Blackboard

September 16th   Sustainable development: policy change or paradigm shift?

Sustainability, and sustainable development have become to a greater or lesser extent, the focus of policy development around the world. What does this imply for societies in terms of reducing our impact, be it our ecological footprint or our allocation of resources, our ‘environmental space’? Will we need a paradigm shift, or can we tweak what we have? We will investigate these challenges at the global, and US scale, using the example of the precautionary principle to illustrate paradigmatic thinking

Readings


September 23rd   What are sustainable communities?

(Case study title due)

There is a general agreement on the features or characteristics of a sustainable community, although to date, no community has all of them. This class will investigate these key features and look at different categorizations of sustainable communities.

Readings:


*Local Environment* is available online through ‘electronic journals’ at the Tisch webpages [http://www11.tdnet.com/frames.asp](http://www11.tdnet.com/frames.asp)


The Ahwahnee Principles for Resource Efficient Communities: [http://www.lgc.org/ahwahnee/principles.html](http://www.lgc.org/ahwahnee/principles.html)

**PART 2**

**HOW DO WE GET THERE?**

**September 30th** Towards sustainable communities: principles, tools and techniques I: Overview

This class will attempt to give an overview of the various tools and techniques (community, planning and economic) and strategies required to develop sustainable communities.

**Readings:**


**On Blackboard**


October 7th Towards sustainable communities: principles, tools and techniques II: Social Networking and Community Based Social Marketing for Sustainability

Guest speaker: Mark Chase (UEP 1997) Goloco.org

We’re convinced about sustainability and sustainable communities, right? But how do we use social networks to get people to ‘buy into’ sustainability (if you’ll excuse a consumerist phrase!). Just giving people lots of information has been shown not to work for people other than those already converted, so how do we reach the undecideds and the others who haven’t even heard of sustainability? Two tools with promise are social networking and social marketing.

Readings:


Chapter 1: Introduction pp1-15
Chapter 3: Commitment: From Good Intentions to Action pp 46-60
Chapter 6: Communication: Creating Effective Messages pp 82-101
Chapter 8: Removing External Barriers pp 116-121

For an overview of social networking in politics:
October 14th  Towards sustainable communities: principles, tools and techniques III: Sustainability Indicators

Sustainability indicators range from welfare-based, to environmental, from economic to social, because, in order to know where you're going (sustainable communities), you've got to know where you are now (unsustainable communities). This class looks at measuring our progress towards (or away from?) sustainability.

Readings:


Local Environment is available online through ‘electronic journals’ at Tisch


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The Boston Indicators Project (familiarize yourself with the 10 categories especially) http://www.tbf.org/indicatorsProject/

Sustainable Measures (familiarize yourself with this excellent online resource)
October 21st  

Case Study I: The Sustainability Challenges of Cities in the South

*(Case Study due)*

**Video: Cities (50 minutes)**

One of the greatest challenges in the quest for more sustainable communities, and especially cities, is the special situation of cities in the South. They are growing extremely quickly and present. As well as the ‘usual’ challenges facing cities in the North, cities in the South face the additional challenge of massive and widespread poverty. Often called the ‘brown’ agenda (as opposed to the ‘green’ agenda), issues of infrastructural development, affordable housing, public transit and poverty alleviation are to the fore.

**Readings:**


October 28th  

Case Study II: Sustainable Development in Planning and Policymaking

*(1 page essay outline due)*

Guest Speaker: Jeffrey Levine, AICP, Planning and Community Development Director, Brookline
Many planning authorities are not yet using policies for sustainability in planning, despite the Guidance available. In this class, we will look at the opportunities to bring sustainability to places in the Boston Metro area.

Readings:


November 4th Case Study III: The Swedish Eco-Municipality Movement

Guest Speaker: Sarah James, co-author of ‘The Natural Step for Communities. How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices’

This class will look at how municipalities in Sweden (compared with those in the US) are putting sustainable principles in practice through the eco-municipality movement. Communities using The Natural Step work towards systematically integrating sustainable principles into all levels of municipal management and programs. There may be some cultural differences between Swedish and US communities, but there are also many commonalities that make this a useful approach here in the US. How to change is as central an issue for municipalities as the principles upon which change is based, and change processes will also be discussed.

Readings:


Nov 11th Veteran’s Day No Classes

PART 3
TOWARDS PARADIGM SHIFT?

November 18th Ecofeminism, Environmental Justice and Sustainability

The dominant orientation or paradigm within sustainability is that it is primarily an environmental endeavor. This class will look at different perspectives, namely ecofeminism and environmental justice and their effects on sustainability theory and practice. If we are looking at paradigm shift, then a broader interpretation of sustainability is a prerequisite in that process.

Readings:


On Blackboard


Apollo Alliance (2007) Community Jobs in the Green Economy. Apollo Alliance/Urban Habitat

November 25th  

Towards Spatial Justice?

Video: Contested Streets (57 minutes)  
http://www.contestedstreets.com/

“Just as social justice requires that life chances are not distributed along class lines, spatial justice requires that they are not distributed geographically”. These sage words by British MP David Lammy remind us that a sustainable community must also be spatially just. How does this concept of ‘spatial justice’ help us as policy makers and planners? In this class we focus on just two examples of current spatial (in)justice: city streetscapes and urban parks, and how we might make changes.

Readings:

NY City Streets Renaissance  
http://www.livablestreets.com/projects/nycsr/project-home
Familiarize yourself with this excellent organization and its website.

Videos by ‘Street Films’ on Upper West Side streets/spatial justice issues:

Streets renaissance: 

Space allocation: 
http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/uws-streets-renaissance-space-allocation/

Amsterdam Avenue: 
http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/uws-streets-renaissance-amsterdam-avenue/


Project for Public Spaces  
http://www.pps.org/  
Familiarize yourself with this excellent organization and its website.

December 2nd  

Redefining the American Dream: Redefining Progress

(Research Essay Due)
Sustainability implies not only a change in the way we currently do things, but a change in what we consider progress, or success, and how we measure it. This class looks back at the (un)Happy Planet Index which we studied in our second class, and forward at this ultimate challenge. It also offers an emerging concept, that of ‘sufficiency’ as a counter to the techno-fix of ‘efficiency’

Readings:


You can download the full report on Blackboard
(From September 9 Class. Please re-read)


Center for a New American Dream (1995) ‘Redefining the American dream: The Search for Sustainable Consumption’


On Blackboard


Sustainable Communities Resources

Online News

The Grist Magazine – Environmental News and Commentary

Envirolink

The EnviroLink Network links to news stories from leading publications and media sources around the world

BBC
http://www.bbc.co.uk/

The Guardian
http://www.guardian.co.uk

A British newspaper with excellent sustainability/environment coverage.

New York Times
http://nytimes.com/

The Earth Times Newspaper
http://www.earthtimes.org/

OneWorld.net
http://www.oneworld.net/

‘We bring together the latest news and views from over 1,600 organizations promoting human rights awareness and fighting poverty worldwide’

Planet Ark
http://www.planetark.com/index.cfm

‘Your daily guide to helping the planet’

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Green Decade Cambridge
http://www.greencambridge.org/

New Ecology Inc.
http://www.newecology.org/

NEI seeks to become a catalyst for sustainable development in cities. We accomplish this mission by promoting best practice and information exchange among three constituencies - CDCs, private developers, and universities - as well as public policy networks.

Green Roundtable
http://www.greenroundtable.org/

‘Moving green into the mainstream’

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sustainable Seattle
Sustainable Seattle is a citizen group working to improve our region's long-term health and vitality--cultural, economic, environmental and social. Their mission is to advocate for sustainability in Seattle/King County.

**Sustainable Santa Monica: Sustainable City Report Card September 2007**

Twelve years ago Santa Monica launched the Sustainable City Plan (SCP), a visionary plan for the community’s future. Santa Monica is now an internationally recognized and award winning sustainability leader. This annual Sustainable City Report Card presents a snapshot of Santa Monica’s progress toward meeting its aggressive Sustainable City Plan goals.

See also:

**Santa Monica’s Sustainable City Progress Report**
http://santa-monica.org/epd/scpr/index.htm

This website, the Sustainable City Progress Report, is the single, most up-to-date resource for residents and policy makers alike in measuring the city’s progress.

**ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability**
http://www.iclei.org/
http://www.iclei.org/us/

ICLEI is an association of local governments dedicated to the prevention and resolution of local, regional, and global environmental problems through local action. Over 300 cities, towns, counties, and their associations from around the world are Members of the Council.

**Sustainable Madison**

Eco-municipality movement - American style

**Sustainable San Francisco**
http://www.sustainable-city.org/

Sustainable City's advocacy for a sustainable future -- one that provides for the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations and the natural world to provide for their own needs -- is embodied in the Sustainability Plan for the City of San Francisco, featured on this website.
One Planet Living
http://www.oneplanetliving.org/

One Planet Living aims to raise the quality of life of families while reducing their ecological footprint, to a "one planet" level.

Project for Public Spaces
http://www.pps.org/

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public places that build communities.

New American Dream
http://www.newdream.org/

The Center for a New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice.

Center for Livable Communities
http://www.lgc.org/center/index.html

The Center for Livable Communities helps local governments and community leaders be proactive in their land use and transportation planning, and adopt programs and policies that lead to more livable and resource-efficient land use patterns. Center programs can help jurisdictions expand transportation alternatives, reduce infrastructure costs, create more affordable housing, improve air quality, preserve natural resources, conserve agricultural land and open space, and restore local economic and social vitality.

The Natural Step
http://www.naturalstep.org/

Principles of sustainability

Smart Growth Online
http://www.smartgrowth.org/

Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life. It leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, it is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities.
Forum on Science and Technology for Sustainability

http://sustsci.aaas.org/document.html

The Forum on Science and Technology for Sustainability seeks to facilitate information exchange and discussion among the growing and diverse group of individuals, institutions, and networks engaged in the field of science and technology for sustainability.

Environmental Research Foundation
http://rachel.org/home_eng.htm

‘Providing understandable scientific information about human health and the environment.’

Sustainability Web Ring
http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=sustainability;id=8;list

Sustainable Measures
http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/

Sustainable Measures is a private consulting firm dedicated to furthering the development of sustainable communities, primarily through the development, understanding and use of indicators of sustainability. Their clients include communities, non-profit organizations, federal, state, regional, and local governments, foundations and the private sector. Maureen Hart has links to Tufts.

Redefining Progress
http://www.rprogress.org/

Redefining Progress is a public policy organization that seeks to ensure a more sustainable and socially equitable world for our children and our children’s children. Working both within and beyond the traditional economic framework, RP generates and refines innovative policies and ideas that balance economic wellbeing, the environment, and social equity so that those living today and those who will come in the future can have a better quality of life. Excellent for work on community indicators.

Center for Neighborhood Technology
http://www.cnt.org/

They promote public policies, new resources and accountable authority which support sustainable, just and vital urban communities.

Sustainable Communities Network
http://www.sustainable.org/
Civic Practices Network
http://www.cpn.org/index.html

Born of the movement for a "new citizenship" and "civic revitalization," CPN is a collaborative and nonpartisan project dedicated to bringing practical tools for public problem solving into community and institutional settings across America.

International Institute for Sustainable Development
http://www.iisd.org/

For development to be sustainable it must integrate environmental stewardship, economic development and the well-being of all people—not just for today but for countless generations to come. This is the challenge facing governments, non-governmental organizations, private enterprises, communities and individuals. Since 1991 IISD's Community Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods program has been trying to understand the complex livelihoods of rural people in less-developed countries.

Urban Ecology
http://www.urbanecology.org/

Oakland based Urban Ecology works to build cities that are ecologically thriving and socially just. Founded in 1975, we envision, design, and plan cities to support a healthy natural environment, a multicultural and thriving community, and an innovative and vigorous local economy. Through educational programs, tools for community planning, and advocacy, Urban Ecology assists diverse constituencies engaged in changing their land use and building patterns. They connect individuals to their neighborhoods, neighborhoods to cities, and cities to the entire Bay Area region.

International Institute for Environment and Development
http://www.iied.org/index.html

IIED is an independent, British based non-profit organization with a mission to promote sustainable patterns of world development through collaborative research, policy studies, consensus building and public information.

The Ahwahnee Principles
http://www.lgc.org/ahwahnee/principles.html

The Hannover Principles (William McDonough, co-author of Cradle to Cradle)
http://www.mcdonough.com/principles.pdf