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Public policies, environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion in developed countries

by

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the range of public policies, concerned with environment health, sustainability and social inclusion, recently introduced by governments in developed countries. Public policies towards environmental health and sustainability are influenced by both international policies and more locally based community concerns. The regulatory responsibilities of government for the protection and promotion of public health are also influential.

Four elements of environmental health will be discussed:

- Supply and demand for water;
- Collection and disposal of waste;
- Air pollution and transport;
- Green public spaces.

Effective public policies to promote environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion depend on: equitable access to quality public services, for example, clean water, waste disposal, public transport, and food inspection; effective regulatory powers of government; access to environmental justice; and collaborative working across government, business and communities.

Public policies for environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion in developed countries

Issues of environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion are the subjects of public policies in many countries and at an international policy level. It could be argued that how these three issues are integrated is one of the most important challenges that policymakers face. This paper examines the effectiveness of public policies in addressing these issues, drawing from a number of examples in developed countries. It also aims to highlight some of the factors that challenge the effective implementation of existing public policies.

This paper starts by defining the terms environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion. The World Health Organization (1993) states that

“Environmental health comprises those aspects of human health, including quality of life, that are determined by physical, chemical, biological and social and psychosocial processes in the environment. It also applies to the theory and practice of assessing, correcting, controlling, and preventing these factors in the environment that can potentially affect the health of present and future generations” (WHO, 1993)

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainable development as

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (WCED, 1987).

The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion defines social inclusion as

“the process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. To achieve inclusion income and employment are necessary but not sufficient. An inclusive society is also characterised by a striving for reduced inequality, a balance between individuals’ rights and duties and increased social cohesion” (Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, 2002).

www.cesi.org.uk

The successful implementation of these three policy areas are all dependent on the effective interaction and relationship between agencies and organisation, some form of redistribution of resources and expanding the scope for individuals and communities to influence their lives and the circumstances within which they live.

Historically, the role of public authorities in investing in services and infrastructure and setting and enforcing environmental standards has been crucial to the promotion of environmental health and social inclusion. It is helpful to take some form of historical perspective because the nature of public policy and the processes that contribute to its development are changing. This paper will try and highlight some of the implications of these changes for future public policies trying to address environment health, sustainable development and social inclusion.

There are significant changes in the policy context that are contributing to raising the profile of these three issues. The concept of 'environmental justice' is beginning to be developed in the United Kingdom and the United States. Lucas et al (2004) found that environmental injustice is a substantive problem in the UK and affects social excluded communities. *"Poor local environmental quality and differential access to environmental goods and services have a detrimental effect on the quality of life"* of disadvantaged groups. The lack of access to goods and services reduces life chances and increases social exclusion. Public policies have started to address environmental concerns but have tended to do this on an issue- by- issue basis and often do not address the disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged groups.

Policies of sustainable development and social inclusion are often implemented separately, delivered by different agencies or parts of government. Church and Elster (2002) in examining links between social and environmental issues, found that getting involved in a local project was a *"key step to active citizenship and environmental issues"* (Church and Elster, 2002:39). These projects often do not use the terms sustainable development. Although some national environmental voluntary organisations have started to link environmental and social issues, this is often hindered by funding from separate sources.

Local action can play an important part in making practical local improvements that meet local needs, raise awareness, implement local plans, engage people previously uninterested in sustainable issues. Successful local projects can help to build support for national policy changes and provide advice on how external/ national support could facilitate local support for national targets. Lucas and Elster (2002) argue that more leadership in sustainable development needs to come from local and regional government.

Lucas (2000) looked at the potential for integrating sustainable development and social exclusion policy agendas through 'New Deal for Communities' implementation, a UK government initiative. The survey of low income groups and their responses to sustainable development and social policy agendas showed that their reaction to sustainable development was strongly influenced by their past experiences, for example, communal heating systems. However, some low income groups felt that there was potential to maximise benefits and minimise costs by combining these two agendas. However, they were sceptical of the empowerment strategies of local public sector officials. They preferred to work with local organisations, separate from the local authority.

In Sweden the national government has made a series of "investments in sustainability" to the value of €800million. This money has been made available to local councils as "matched funding" and this has been spent on Agenda 21 projects (Church and Elster, 2002:43). This suggests that making resources available as well as providing national leadership is important in supporting local government action.

International policies have played a significant role in shaping policy towards environmental and sustainable development at both national and particularly local levels. Local Agenda 21 and the Healthy Cities initiative have contributed to raising awareness of how these issues can be addressed at local level and provided structured opportunities to develop local plans and

initiatives. The Rio Summit (1992) and the promotion of local agenda 21 across local government have been particularly important.

However, international policies are not always disseminated evenly throughout individual countries. In Europe, the evaluation of the Environmental and Health Process and Action Plans (NEHAPS) found that NEHAPS worked as a process for bringing together environment, health and other government sectors on a common project. It has helped to place environmental health higher on the agenda. In Central and Eastern Europe it led to the development of environmental health legislation and institutional building. It has also introduced new ways of helping sectors work together (Perlstadt, 2000).

However, NEHAPS primarily involved government sectors at national level. There was little awareness by people not directly involved in the plans. The study recommended that Environment and Health Process in Europe should continue as a separate process but coordinate more with other international processes on environment and sustainable development. Coordination is still needed at all levels (Perlstadt, 2000).

This paper will now explore how public policies address these issues within a framework of four factors that influence environmental and public health:

- Supply and demand for water;
- Collection and disposal of waste;
- Air pollution and transport;
- Green public spaces.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR WATER

Water is one of the factors that play a key role in maintaining public and environmental health. Access to safe water is a major contributor to the social inclusion of communities. Increasingly the management of supply and demand for water throughout the world is a component of a sustainable development policy or strategy. Public authorities have played a key role in ensuring the provision of water to communities. This situation is changing and this paper takes a historical approach to illustrate some of the challenges to public policies. In most Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, urban water systems started to develop in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as limited services for customers who could pay, and as public assistance for fire control. As cities expanded in the nineteenth century, there was a growing demand for water. Increasingly, the unsafe water and unsanitary conditions causes a range of public health issues (Juuti and Katko, 2005).

In 29 European cities and urban centres, throughout Europe, municipal and public authorities took over water operations in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Juuti & Katko, 2005). There was a similar rapid process of municipal authorities taking control over the water supply in the United States from the late nineteenth century. The private sector was unwilling or unable to make the necessary investments required to expand the provision of water.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, over 90% of water systems in Germany, Sweden, and Finland were run by municipalities. Inefficiency, high costs and corruption were the main reasons for this transfer to municipal ownership. The new municipal authorities, democratically elected, bought the existing water systems and also set up new ones to meet the demand for water in rapidly growing urban areas. Municipal water services were better controlled and both provided employment and improved benefits for local people (Juuti and Katko, 2005).

The expansion of water provision in European cities took place under public operators. There were several forms of public ownership: municipal departments, municipally owned companies or state-owned companies. Melosi (2001) argues that public finance was an essential part of this process. Municipal authorities were able to borrow money to fund the high costs of expanding and maintaining water and sanitation systems.

Even in countries where the private sector maintained its role as major water provider, such as France, there has also been significant municipal influence in investment and the extension of provision. During the second half of the nineteenth century, private concessions were the dominant providers but there was very little extension of the network of water provision. The water network only expanded between 1900 and 1960 when municipal companies, called 'regies', took over as providers and investors in the water system. Even after the private sector became involved in the sector again after 1960, the responsibility for investments remained with the municipalities (Hall *et al.*, 2004).

There are also examples of public water systems in the twentieth century being expanded to include socially and geographically marginal urban communities. In Rome, the municipality demanded a wider range of environmental services from ACEA (*Azienda Comunale Elettricità e Acque*), the municipal enterprise for electricity and water. In 1975, ACEA was asked to expand the provision of water to illegal urban settlements in peri-urban areas, known as "*borgate*". About 350,000 people lived in these peri-urban areas, almost 12% of the population of Rome. Raw wastewater contaminated ground water. Until this time, water had been provided by tank by ACEA but extension of the water supply contributed to Rome's sustainable development (Lobina and , 2005 www.watertime.org).

In 1985, ACEA became responsible for operating wastewater treatment (Battilossi, 2001:332) took on responsibility for provide wastewater treatment to 3 million people. This helped to establish ACEA as the "*unique operator of integrated water services*". By 1989, ACEA had changed its name from "*Azienda Comunale Elettricità e Acque*" Municipal Enterprise for Electricity and Water to "*Azienda Comunale Energia e Ambiente*" Municipal Enterprise for Energy and Environment.

This example shows the role that public authorities have played in the expansion of water supply and sanitary services through municipal enterprises. This is one way in which public policies are implemented which address environmental health, sustainability and social inclusion.

The future supply and demand for water is an issue facing many regions. As water resource management becomes more urgent, the involvement of local communities is seen as important to ensure policies meet local needs and draws on local knowledge and insight. An illustration of how community involvement can be supported, can be found in the case of the Murray Darling River basin in Australia. The river basin provides extensive agricultural output as well as water for Adelaide and nearby cities and settlements. Local communities have taken an active in preservation and maintaining the sustainability of the system. This involved setting up a community consultation process and organising educational programmes in schools, which helped raise awareness of the environment. Both governmental and non-governmental organisations have undertaken projects, which have been publicised by the media. Coordinated local action is needed to "deal adequately with the complex interface between environmental and societal issues" (www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/research).

At a European level, the Aarhus Convention (1998) provides significant new impetus for the involvement of people and communities in environmental issues. It promote the public rights of access to environmental information; the public right to participate in decision-making processes; and ensure access to justice for the public (Hall *et al.*, 2004; www.org/env/).

Also, at a European level, 16 countries have ratified the European Protocol on Water and Health. This was developed following the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International Lakes. With the 2005, ratification the Protocol will become active on 4 August 2005 "*as the first legally binding instrument for the prevention and control of water-related diseases through improved and harmonised water supply and management*".

Both the World Health Organization European Region and the United Nations Economic Commission support the Protocol for Europe (UNECE). The Protocol brings together a holistic

approach to “*preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases includes both the supply or safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation and the basic-wide protection of water resources*”. A wide range of stakeholders - professionals, scientific experts, general public, NGOs and local action groups - and international cooperation, support the Protocol. The process involves setting targets and establishing effective monitoring programmes. However, it has taken almost 13 years to get countries to sign up to this protocol and its approach is that of monitoring, rather than strong regulator (www.unece.org/env).

The European Union Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) was an attempt to improve and consolidate EU water legislation in the light of severe problems with European water and the implementation of earlier water Directives. It aims to improve the ecological status of surface and groundwater organisations. The most important effect of this Directive has been the change in approach to water management by river organisations, adopting a more holistic view of the river basin and the activities affecting it (Hall, *et al*, 2004).

Public policies and public authorities have played a key role in the provision of water and sanitation. The process of extending the system of water provision and sanitation contributes to the process of social inclusion as well as increases an element of sustainability for marginalised communities.

Although there are extensive national and international policies, which seek to address many crucial issues that relate to the environment, there is still uncertainty, about the effect of privatisation on water provision and how public authorities will seek to work and influence private providers of water. In addition, effective resource management also requires effective involvement of local communities and there is still more to be done to create effective structures for consultation and improved communication.

COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF WASTE

How waste is collected and disposed of also impacts on environmental health, sustainable development and social inclusion. Increasingly waste management is being seen as playing an integral part in sustainable economic development. One element involves the promotion of a hierarchy of waste solutions with waste avoidance seen as the optimum solution and the disposal of unsorted waste as the least desirable solution. Establishing new economic activities for the design, production, and distribution and final disposal of products to minimise waste and environmental damage is also central to sustainable economic development.

Linked to this are economic activities that are based on the production of environmental goods and services and the distribution, maintenance and eventual disposal of such products. Also important, and yet to be fully developed are new collective and collaborative structures to help introduce and manage sustainable economic development (Roberts, 2004).

Environmentally sound economic activity can make a major contribution to sustainable development. Linked to sustainable economic development is the concept of ecological modernisation, which aims to address some of the past models of development and bring a reconciliation of economic and environmental objectives to both government and private sector organisations (Roberts, 2004:129).

This can also be a way of introducing social justice and social inclusion to communities in regions experiencing economic decline. In the United Kingdom, this has been recognised by regional development agencies as well as other organisations in the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

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One element of sustainable economic development is the more coordinated approach to the management of waste and the promotion of alternative models for the organisations of economic activities, including cross-sectoral collaboration and community businesses. It is also concerned with the decentralisation of decisionmaking from national to regional and local level, involving non-governmental actors. The role of local community organisations and groups involved with environmental issues is also encouraged. These approaches have been promoted through the use of European Union Structural Funds for regional development programmes to deliver environmental management and ecological modernisation (Roberts and Colwell, 2001).

There have been attempts to establish industrial ecosystems where firms, within a locality or region, exchange waste and products. In Kaldunborg, Denmark *“a series of waste and product exchanges have been established over a period of 20 years, including arrangements for the transfer of surplus energy, materials and semi-finished products* (Ehrenfield and Chertow, 2002). Surplus and waste materials are transferred between a power plant, a refinery, a fish farms, a wallboard plant, various city buildings and services as well as other domestic, industrial and commercial activities (Roberts, 2004). This arrangement started in 1961 with plans to use surface water from a nearby lake for a new oil refinery to save surface water. Water is scarce in this part of Denmark. The municipal council of Kaldunborg took responsibility for building the pipeline and the oil company financed it. Gradually partners, with new projects, have become involved. The municipality receives excess heat from the power station, which is used for domestic heating. The role of the municipal council has been a crucial link in the local network (UNEP, 1997).

Economically sustainable development can also contribute to promoting social inclusion by playing a part in regional development policies. Regional development agencies in the United Kingdom have played an important role in the promotion of sustainable economic development. The focus on the regional economy, especially in regions experiencing economic decline, has presented new opportunities for promoting and supporting new types of industry.

London Remade is a programme that recycles waste in the London region. It is part of the Greater London Authority, a public authority. It aims to expand the marketability of recycled products through the expansion of existing industrial activities, which re-use waste material and through the promotion of new activities and technologies, which reuse waste materials (Gray et al, 2002). The programmes offer technical and marketing support for eco-industries in the Thames Gateway area (east London), in order to create jobs. It also aims to create jobs indirectly, through stimulating purchasing of recycled products, especially in the public sector. The other part is the Supply Infrastructure Project, which aims to increase the efficiency in the collection and sorting of waste, to improve the quality of recycled products for eco-industries (Gray et al, 2002).

The programme operates throughout the London region. It is an example of a public policy initiative, which seeks to address both an increase in recycling and an increase in employment and economic development within the London region. The programme operates alongside a number of other policy initiatives at national and European level. These includes rising Landfill tax rates, European Directives on Waste Management and government targets for recycling (Gray et al, 2002).

London Remade is a partnership between several public sector agencies, who control and organise the supply of recyclable materials. It works to stimulate the demand for recycled products by private sector companies, which are necessary for the success of public recycling policies (Gray et al, 2002).

Once a municipal authority collects waste, investments can increase the amount of recycling and decrease the amount of waste to incinerators in three ways. Changes in methods of collection of waste enable households to make more waste available for recycling. Changes in the extent of separation of waste facilitate more materials for recycling. Changes in the materials used for recycling which generates more revenue and stimulated investment. Some of these processes are more labour intensive than others and will only create new jobs when funding is available to cover the new labour costs (Gray *et al*, 2002).

Jobs are created in the collection and sorting of waste, in companies processing waste materials, in community recycling projects and joint local authority ventures, in separate services run by local authorities for collection of additional recycled materials, and in manufacturing, construction and horticultural enterprises that use recycled materials. The evaluation of Remade found that more jobs were created in the recycling of consumer goods, for example furniture, than in local authority 'box' schemes, where households put waste for recycling into a box, which is collected by the local authority or contractor. Different products have a different potential for job creation. The greatest potential is found in plastic bottle, aluminium packaging, glass sorted at the kerbside and steel packaging. The lowest number of jobs are generated by glass collection, whether sorted or unsorted (Gray *et al*, 2002).

It is becoming more apparent that the levels at which decisions are made can play an important role in bringing together policies of sustainable development and social inclusion. Regional and local level agencies are playing a significant role in developing and promoting waste disposal programmes. The role of public authorities also plays a role in shaping demand and supply of recycled products, which cannot be left to market forces.

AIR POLLUTION AND TRANSPORT POLICIES

The links between air pollution, transport policies and social inclusion is becoming more widely recognised by governments in developed countries. A local survey by the NGO, Friends of the Earth, in Bradford, UK found that negative traffic impacts are concentrated in more deprived areas. Areas where people have problems in accessing services also have low levels of car ownership, poor public transport services, deprivation and high volumes of traffic.

The UK Government has recently started to address issues of social exclusion and transport by commissioning research to identify solutions to problems experienced by people facing social exclusion in reaching work and key services. Transport problems can contribute to social exclusion in several ways. People may not be able to access services because they are unable to use public transport because of low incomes or because public transport services do not run to where they need to go. Age and disability also have a disproportionate impact on access to transport. Problems with transport can also heighten social exclusion because it stops people using local services - jobs, learning, healthcare, food shopping, and leisure. Road traffic affects disadvantaged neighbourhoods in many ways, through pedestrian accidents, noise, pollution, and the effect of busy streets cutting through residential areas.

In the UK, the government has introduced measures to address these issues. In many areas, retired people and people with disabilities are eligible for free or cheaper public transport fares. There is additional support for rural buses and community transport schemes. Legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act, has been used to make public transport more accessible. New planning guidance requires all major new development to be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, a main street, Stroget, was pedestrianised in 1962. A recent study showed that this has successfully deterred car use and has created a more open-air, pedestrian focused café-culture. Over the last 40 years, the city centre has improved "*becoming more used and appreciated*" (Smienk G. and Knuijt M., 1995). Walpole (2000) argues that for pedestrianisation policies to be successful, social and cultural issues need to be treated sensitively, coupled with high quality design.

Home Zones are an example of a scheme that has tried to address some of the transport problems of urban communities. Several European countries have developed them as a response to problems of the urban environment. Home Zones try and rebalance and redesign streets for the benefits of pedestrian, cyclists and local residents. The focus is on a social use of streets only allowing vehicles limited access.

The concept of the “*living yard*” (woonerf) was first developed in the Netherlands in Delft, where footways and carriageways were integrated into one surface, which created a shared environment, where children’s play and other social activities could take place, as well as vehicle movement. This approach has been implemented in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France and Switzerland. It has recently been introduced in the England and Scotland (Hamilton Baillie, 2001).

An Evaluation of Home Zones in Scotland found that there was considerable interest in Home Zones with 26 Home Zone projects being developed. All 32 Scottish local authorities were surveyed and there was a high response rate. A second survey was sent to house builders, architects, housing associations and developers. Although the response rate was slower, there was still considerable interest. However, there were two major barriers identified: lack of funding and design information. In Scotland, local authorities are waiting for the results of the Scottish Executive pilot projects. Some local authorities were seen as supportive but others were making it difficult for housing associations to introduce Home Zones. Stakeholder groups requested more information, in different forms (Scottish Home Zones report).

A study of home zones in Europe found that the concept of a Home Zones has to be set in a longer time frame. They are really only one step in a long process of integrating and combining various social and functional aspects of communities. Successful home zones are dependent on the local community taking collective action. Often stronger community organisations are needed. Home Zones are an example of an initiative, which has been taken by public authorities, but which is dependent on strong involvement of local communities for successful implementation (Hamilton-Baillie, 2001).

Speed reduction to 20 mph is a key to success. Home Zones are part of wider set of measures to protect villages and towns from adverse impact of the car and increasing the quality of design of public urban spaces. Specific policies to promote walking and cycling are also needed. A balance of integration and segregation is needed for users of streets and public spaces. The relationship between the social domain and the domain of traffic is separated in the Netherlands and Sweden (Hamilton-Baillie, 2001).

Ways of addressing transport issues, sustainability and social inclusion have been developed most effectively at local level but there is also a need for national level policies which promote integrated and sustainable transport policies. This requires balancing the interests of transport users as well as pedestrians and cyclists. It also requires challenging the role of the car in society.

GREEN PUBLIC SPACES

Historically, municipal authorities, through investment and management of basic public services, have played a key role in urban development and in promoting services that addressed both environmental and social issues (Pincetl 2003). Increasingly, the demands for urban environments that are healthy, sustainable and socially inclusive, have begun to focus on how urban space is designed, shaped and safeguarded. Public authorities and public policies contribute to successful urban development but other interests within the city also have to be involved. Urban development strategies also have to bring together policies of environmental health, sustainable development and social inclusion. This section will highlight how this has been approached and some of the tensions that result.

In the UK, the 'Sustainable Communities' strategy, which promotes new urban developments in the southeast of England and redevelopment strategies in northern regions, is an attempt to bring both sustainable development and social inclusion together. However, the concept of sustainable communities is highlighting the tension between sustainable development and the neo-liberal state. Already in this paper, it has been pointed out that the role of the public sector in the provision and management of water was critical for the establishment in inclusive systems in large urban areas. However, the privatisation of water and waste disposal services, raise questions about the power of the public sector and public authorities in addressing some of the issues of water scarcity and management in the future.

Raco (2005) examines some of the tensions that have emerged with the increased use of the concept of sustainable development at the same time as neo-liberal policies have been implemented. Sustainable development has become widely used and accepted within planning regimes in Europe and North America. At the same time, the role of the state had changed, particularly the nature of the regulatory state. While *et al* (2004) argue that new forms of environmental regulation create different challenges for public authorities, depending on the nature of the local economy, local dependence on firms, workers, and residents and the condition of the urban infrastructure. Different spheres of authority of the state and struggles over the most appropriate level of regulation also have an impact on how sustainable development is pursued.

Sustainable development can be argued to be taking on a neo-liberal form, especially in the way that business interests have incorporated, at least, the rhetoric and, in some cases, practical aspects of sustainable development (Raco, 2005). However, the presence of effective local coalitions can also mediate some of the influences of neo-liberal policies.

Many countries have taken on the concept of sustainable communities. In some areas, local people have given responsibilities for developing their own structures, where the welfare state has been dismantled. This might be seen as institutionalising the decline in state support and making community members develop their replacement services and structures. However, the process of having to work together to create new structures can also provide a degree of social cohesion.

The tensions between sustainable development and social inclusion can be seen within recent urban development programmes in Leeds and Manchester, two large cities in the north of England that have experienced economic decline. These two cities also illustrate the importance that local coalitions play in effective integration of sustainable development and social inclusion policies. The focus of much new urban development in advanced capitalist societies is to "*enhance the economic value of urban space and attract mobile capital*" (Raco, 2005:549).

At the same time local authorities are pressured to take up a sustainable development strategy through Agenda 21 and other international policy initiatives. While *et al*, 2004 suggest that although these two agendas can be seen as in conflict, there is also evidence that a "*new urban entrepreneurialism*" is also taking on the sustainable development and environmental agenda through remaking the city. This phase of urban development has often been characterized by the cleaning up of old industrial sites, river restoration and the opening up of urban open spaces. While *et al* argue that corporate interests have incorporated environmental concerns into local economic strategies.

Leeds has dealt with these issues most successfully. A broad based cross-sectoral initiative was established in 1990, called the Leeds Initiative. It brought together the City Council with a range of local interests. Through an extensive consultation process, it developed a "*Vision for Leeds*", which has shaped the transformation of the city in the last 15 years. It has taken a positive approach to sustainable development and environmental policies, adopting a green strategy. Leeds was successful in making the city a model "environmental city" to demonstrate environmental practice through the United Kingdom. Within the "*Vision for Leeds*" is a strategy for sustainable development, which recognises that the city has to attain "*economic prosperity,*

social equity and environmental protection” together (Leeds Initiative, 1999). A strong alliance of environmental interests has also been formed.

National governments now interact with other levels of government in more complex ways, than in the past, partly due to different degrees of decentralisation. Local government may have more scope to make decisions. Tosics and Dukes (2005) examined how Urban Development Corporations impact on different levels of national public administration systems. They found that the degree of decentralisation and presence of a national urban policy framework determined the degree to which Urban Development Programmes can be “*planned, approved and implemented at local level*”. Strong national urban policies have a greater influence than the model of public administration but they still have to work with municipal government and governance methods at local level (Tosics and Dukes, 2005).

In Sweden, the Metropolitan Development Initiative makes local development agreements between central government and seven local councils. These are public-public partnerships with the goals set by central government. The goals are to create long term sustainable growth in city regions, to break social, ethnic and discriminatory segregation in the city regions, and promote equality and equal living conditions for city residents. The local authorities have to translate this into action (Tosics and Dukes, 2005:399). Costs are shared equally in local development agreements.

Urban Development Corporations in Thames Gateway, which have been set up as part of the Sustainable Communities policy, have been scaled down and local authorities and local communities have been given places on the boards. The local planning system, controlled by local authorities, has been maintained. This represents some acknowledgement that to promote sustainable communities required action by government at different levels and that market forces will not deliver what is needed. Links have to be made between planning, economic development, community change and environmental sustainability (Raco, 2005). There is recognition that there are structural imbalances in the economy that need to be adjusted.

Securing high quality urban environments, which address goals of sustainability and social inclusion, requires clear national public policies, as well as regional and local policies, which are sensitive to local conditions. Urban coalitions, which bring together local stakeholders, with strong participation by public authorities, private interests and local community actors, can provide the vision and direction for new urban strategies. The costs of high quality design, coupled with an awareness of how space is used by different community groups is also an important factor in the success of urban development schemes.

CONCLUSION

The successful integration of environmental health, sustainable development and social inclusion policies depends on several factors. The provision and investment in public services by public authorities has played an important role in many developed countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The concept of ‘environmental justice’ has to be implemented in different countries so that social excluded groups can have advice and information, backed by legislation, to challenge environmental issues that threaten the health and well-being of communities.

The role of the state as regulator has changed in recent decades. Technically, the state is supposed to provide more of an enabling and regulating role rather than being a direct provider. However, there is still extensive work to be done about how to develop regulatory functions that are effective and deciding what is the most appropriate level to deliver them.

Coalitions, which bring together different interests, especially local communities needs to be supported by public policies and public authorities. How these interests are mediated will ultimately influence the extent to which environmental health, sustainable development and social inclusion policies are implemented successfully.

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