

PART 2: THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Overview and times

This part of the course begins August 28th, 2012, and ends September 10th. It has supportive lectures, and asks you to read parts of the course literature, analyse the texts, write an essay based on your analysis, and give written comments to two other students' essays.

Main issues and questions

What are the challenges of sustainable urban development? And why is sustainability so hard to achieve? In the second part of the course we explore the concept sustainable development, its historical roots and how it is interpreted, enacted and used in contemporary planning and policy practice. Through a discursive approach we open the concept up to explore its plurality and to scrutinize these from a power perspective. In relation to this we also look into the role of the planner and of planning.

Based on lectures and introductory articles, you should individually analyse different kinds of texts on urban sustainable development. You should learn to identify how words and expressions are used in different ways by different stakeholders, for their purposes, in their contexts – and what interpretations of sustainable urban development they put forth. To your help there are readings on both discourse analysis and on the concept of sustainable development. These texts can of course also be chosen as texts to analyse.

The assignment

1. Write a short paragraph introducing the reader to what a discourse is and why and when a discursive approach is helpful when it comes to sustainable urban development. If you do not think it is helpful but harmful or a waste of time explain why this is the case.
2. Pick five texts to read that in some way deals with sustainable urban development. These can be taken from the course literature, from other readings, newspapers, blog entries, websites etc. but they need to be in English. Read them through. For each text answer the following questions:
 - What kind of text is this? Is it a political/policy document? A scientific text? A planning document? Something else?
 - Why do you think that this text belong to that category? Provide arguments supported by concrete examples.
 - From a discursive perspective, what are the characteristics of this text? Provide concrete examples from the text. E.g.:
 - What problem/s is emphasised?
 - How is sustainable development interpreted/defined?
 - What is seen as appropriate solutions?
 - How is the responsibility for taking action allocated?
 - Based on these characteristics, what discourse do you think this text belong to? Specify what characteristics you base this on.
 - Who do you think are the proponents of this discourse? Why?
 - How does this discourse differ from the other discourses you have identified?

When answering these questions be as concrete and exact as possible. Use quotations but make sure that you clearly show that you are quoting someone. Your answer does not have to be written in fluent text but can be given as bullet-points. But don't forget to argue for why you think one way or another. When doing the discourse analysis a table can be of good help to keep track of all characteristics. This table can be included in the hand-in if it helps your discussion.

3. Take a look at the texts and discourses you've analysed. Is there any of these discourses that you agree with more than the other ones? Write a short text discussing why you think that this way of

interpreting and enacting sustainable urban development is the proper way. Why is this the way to do it? In relation to this you also need to discuss why you don't agree with the other discourses. What are their fallacies? Finally, discuss how you see the role of the planner/urban designer/architect in relation to sustainable urban development and how this relates to your way of looking upon sustainable urban development.

Main tasks

- Attend lectures, participate in introductions, discussions etc.
- Individually, read and analyse your selected texts. Base your analysis on information from lectures, literature and the questions above. Report as a 3-5-page essay (Times, 12p, double spacing), with references. Tables and reference list are not included in the 3-5 pages.
- Read two other students' essays, analyse and assess them. Write short comments in the texts. To what extent do they address the questions above? Have the authors understood the concept of discourse? You will be informed which essays to read.

Deliverables

Wednesday, September 5th, no later than 18h: Individually, via Bilda (Discussion Forum), the essay.

Give the file your family name, put your name at the beginning of the document.

Friday, September 7th, no later than 18h: Individually, via Bilda (Discussion Forum), comments and assessment of two other students' essays.

Rename the file you have assessed: Add your initials in capitals to the file name. Also put "Comments by:" and your name at the top of the document.

Objectives

After this part of the course, you should be able to individually:

- define basic differences in the definitions and uses of the concept of sustainable development
- identify elements of the aforementioned discourses in texts (and other media) on strategic planning and societal development;
- structure and write a short essay summarising these findings; and
- critically assess the essays of other students.

Literature

Some suggestions on texts to analyse:

*WCED 1987: Towards Sustainable Development

*UN 1992 and 1996: The Rio Declaration and The Istanbul Declaration

*Calthorpe P 1993: The Next American Metropolis

*Newman P & Kenworthy J 1989: Traffic Calming

*Maclaren V 1996: Urban Sustainability Reporting

Albrechts, L. 2010: More of the same is not enough! How could strategic spatial planning be instrumental in dealing with the challenges ahead? *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 37: 1115-1127.

Orrskog, L. & Bradley, K. (2006) "Vitalizing Planning for a Neo-Welfare State: A Suggestion Based on Swedish Experiences", in *International Planning Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 125–136. Available at: http://karinbradley.se/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/vitalizing_planning.pdf

*articles in the course book

Compulsory supportive reading on discourse theory and discourse analysis:

Dryzek, J 2005: *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*. Oxford University Press; pp 5-20.

Hajer M & Versteeg W 2005: A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: achievements, challenges, perspectives; *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*; 7, 3; pp 175 – 184.

Suggested supportive reading on the concept of sustainable development:

Campbell and Carruthers are useful to further understand the concept of discourses, and how interpretations influence outcomes, but can also be analysed as discourse. Connelly and Rydin presents a number of ways to understand sustainable development and the dimensions introduced are well apt to be used as characteristics when doing your analysis. All of this literature is compulsory reading for the course so you need to read it anyway.

Campbell, H. 2006: Is the Issue of Climate Change too Big for Spatial Planning? *Planning Theory & Practice*, 7 (2): 201-230. *Read pages 201-214.*

Carruthers, D. 2001: From Opposition to Orthodoxy: The Remaking of Sustainable Development; In: Dryzek, J.S. & Schlosberg, D., (2005) *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*; New York: Oxford University Press

Connelly, S. 2007: Mapping Sustainable Development as a Contested Concept; *Local Environment*, 12: 3; pp 259-278. *Read pages 259-268.*

Rydin, Y. 2010: *Governing for Sustainable Urban Development*. London: Earthscan. Chapter 1.

Recommended further reading:

Swyngedouw, E. 2007 'Impossible "Sustainability" and the Postpolitical Condition', in Krueger, Roger & Gibbs, David (eds.) *The Sustainable Development Paradox: urban political economy in the United States and Europe*, The Guilford Press, New York, pp.13-40.

Tunström M 2007: The vital city: constructions and meanings in the contemporary Swedish planning discourse; *Town Planning Review*; 78, 6; pp 681-698.

What to comment upon

There are many ways to comment. You can write your comments directly in the document using the Word function "Track changes". Alternatively, write your comments at the beginning of the document. Or in a separate document. A total of half a page of comments is perfectly ok.

Your comments should in the first hand be your personal reflections concerning the contents of the essays you read. However, you should also comment how the author has tackled the task, based on the following:

- Structure and clarity of essay.
- Length is less important than quality – if the author says what is needed to say in 2-3 pages that is perfectly ok.
- Whether all parts of the assignment have been covered.
- To what extent arguments are provided.
- The use of a consistent and proper way of referencing, including quotations.

We will let you know no later than Wednesday September 5th what essays to comment upon.

The seminar

At the seminar on September 10th you discuss your and the other papers in your group in order to receive and give comments and suggestions. At the seminar, you have one hour to go through ca 10 papers. This might be changed in which case you will be informed. Each student should be prepared to 1) as an author, present their ideas and comment upon any difficulties with the assignment, and 2) as a discussant comment upon the essays you have been reading.