



From Garden City to Eco-urbanism: The quest for sustainable neighborhood development



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ABSTRACT

Since the early 20th century various planning movements have been developed. It would be useful to trace the evolution of these movements to see how their underlying principles have changed and how successful they have been in addressing the requirements of sustainable development. Literature on five selected movements is reviewed. These are, namely, Garden City, Neighborhood Unit, Modernism, Neo-traditionalism, and Eco-urbanism. Results show that evolution of neighborhood planning is characterized by the progressive inclusion of different dimensions of the sustainability concept. However, there are still many difficulties in terms of translating the rhetoric into action.

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1. Introduction

Since antiquity, human settlements have been spatially divided into districts and neighborhoods (Friedmann, 2010; Smith, 2010), which signifies the importance of neighborhoods in the fabric of the city. As a basic planning unit, neighborhood has always been of particular interest to planners and urban visionaries (Rohe, 2009). Since the early 20th century, various theories and models have been developed with the purpose of creating better and more livable neighborhoods. Emergence of the concept of sustainable development and the emphasis it places on the local level has led to a renewed interest in developing new initiatives for neighborhood planning (Farr, 2008; Rohe, 2009; Wheeler, 2004). Interest in pursuing sustainability goals through planning at the neighborhood level has been burgeoning in the recent years and sustainability principles are increasingly used to guide neighborhood development (Luederitz, Lang, & Von Wehrden, 2013). Throughout the world, numerous initiatives have been launched to pursue sustainability through appropriate planning at the neighborhood level (Farr, 2008; Komeily & Srinivasan, 2015; Sharifi & Murayama, 2013).

While sustainability and sustainable neighborhood development are relatively new concepts, neighborhood planning, as a discipline and profession, is rather well-established and has been practiced since the early 20th century. Sustainable neighborhood initiatives can be regarded as a continuation of urban planning and design trends which have sought to develop livable and environment-friendly neighborhoods from the early 20th century onwards, starting with Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement (Farr, 2008). This paper provides a historical presentation of major planning and design movements that have led to the neighborhood sustainability paradigm, as is explained in Section 2. This includes discussion on the transformation of underlying principles of neighborhood planning since the emergence of the concept of sustainability.

Literature on major neighborhood planning movements since the early 20th century is reviewed in this paper. These movements are, namely, Garden City, Neighborhood Unit, Modernism, Neo-traditional Planning, and Eco-urbanism. Other movements exist that, based on their origin and underlying principles, are categorized as subsets of the selected movements. Despite abundance of research on these movements, previous work has mainly focused on single movements and there is a lack of work that investigates and compares different movements. An exception is the work by Rohe (2009). However, his work has limited focus on Neo-traditional movements and does not include Eco-urban movements. This article intends to fill this void in the literature on neighborhood planning through dealing with the following main questions:

- How have the values and guiding principles of neighborhood planning changed over time?
- Is there overlap and cross-fertilization between different movements?
- Have neighborhood planning movements been able to realize their promises and has over one century of research and practice on neighborhood planning led to the development of neighborhoods that are acceptable from the point of view of sustainability?

This retrospective analysis makes it possible to understand successes and failures of each movement, highlight problems impeding achievement of the main goals of neighborhood planning, and understand major issues that need to be considered in the future. Previous planning movements have been criticized for not recognizing planning cultures that preceded them (Talen, 2005). This analysis can be useful for contemporary and future movements to learn lessons from the past that can facilitate achieving more sustainable neighborhood development. This study is also important because estimates show that almost all future population growth will occur in urban areas of developing countries (UNDESA, 2012). This includes countries such as China and India, where many developments under the rubric of "Eco-urbanism" are already underway. These developments can learn from successes and failures of previous movements and be directed into more sustainable pathways to avoid lock-in into non-sustainable patterns.

In the following section the methods and materials used for the purpose of this study are explained. Section 3 explains the evolution of the selected approaches to neighborhood planning. In Section 4, the research questions are discussed in light of the findings of the study. Section 5 concludes the study and provides some suggestions for future research.

2. Methods and materials

This section elaborates on the definition of sustainability adopted for this research, describes the process of selecting papers for review, and explains the rationale for focusing on the five selected movements.

The concept of sustainable development has been frequently used and spread over the past three decades after it was emphasized in the Brundtland report. Although there is still no single, universally accepted definition of sustainability, as a common thread, most definitions emphasize the importance of integrating social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions (Boyoko, Cooper, Davey, & Wootton, 2006; Sharifi & Murayama, 2013; Valentin & Spangenberg, 2000). Social criteria are intended to, among other things, improve livability of communities and enhance intra-generational equity of the development through responding to the needs of a diverse range of community groups. Economic criteria aim to enhance self-sufficiency and economic wellbeing of the development through creating jobs and attracting investment (Beatley & Brower, 1993; Berke & Conroy, 2000). Environmental criteria bring attention to ecological constraints and enhance inter-generational equity of development by encouraging smart use of resources and mitigating climate change (reducing greenhouse gas emissions) (Beatley & Brower, 1993; Georgiadou & Hacking, 2011; Gibson, 2006; Kennedy, Cuddihy, & Engel-Yan, 2007; Scrase & Sheate, 2002; Wheeler, 2004). They are also conducive to resilience and adaptation to climate change and have interlinkages with equity issues (Gibson, 2006; Gleeson, 2012; Mueller & Dooling, 2011). Institutional criteria intend to ensure that various stakeholders are engaged in the planning process and institutional support exists for implementing projects (Mulligan, Guthrie, Stigge, & Tuzzolo, 2011; Wheeler, 2004). Institutional criteria improve acceptability and viability of developments. Various criteria for assessing sustainability exists in the literature (Wheeler, 2004). As this paper does not aim to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on sustainability assessment,

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